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First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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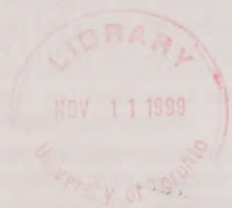
Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 4 November 1999

Jeudi 4 novembre 1999



**Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr**

**Président
L'honorable Gary Carr**

**Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 novembre 1999

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

POLICE RECORDS CHECKS

BY NON-PROFIT AGENCIES ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LES VÉRIFICATIONS
DES DOSSIERS DE POLICE

PAR LES AGENCES SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Mr Kormos moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act respecting the cost of checking the police records of individuals who may work for certain non-profit service agencies / Projet de loi 9, Loi concernant les frais de vérification des dossiers de police à l'égard des particuliers qui pourraient travailler pour certaines agences de services sans but lucratif.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Kormos moves second reading of Bill 9. You have 10 minutes.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'll tell you straight off that this was prompted by the government's announcement in, I believe, April of this year of what's called Christopher's Law, and that was the pedophile or sex offender registry. That was one of the recommendations in the verdict of the jury in the inquest into the death of Christopher Stephenson. I think most of us recall it with some great horror. The public wasn't well served at all, when one takes a look at the history of the predator who ultimately murdered Christopher Stephenson back in 1988.

The jury undoubtedly went through an incredibly difficult task merely listening to the history of events, but compiled and put forward an incredibly comprehensive list of recommendations. At the outset, I think all of us have to acknowledge that this government was responsive in terms of proposing its sex offender registry, and we're told that's going to be reintroduced in this new term. Specifically, that was recommendation 44, requiring an offender to register with the police in the jurisdiction where that offender will reside or is residing.

But what of the other recommendations? One of the responses to the sex offender registry proposal alone is that it's not a very comprehensive approach to the problem, is it? It addresses but one recommendation. I understand as well that the government has made a

commitment of some modest funds, as I recall it, to be utilized over the course of three years, basically to help agencies utilizing volunteers to develop programs to screen applicants.

One of the other recommendations in the verdict of that jury was that Canadian police forces be encouraged to co-operate in providing consensual background checks on prospective volunteers to volunteer organizations at a minimal charge. That prompted me to make some inquiries about what kinds of charges were being imposed on volunteer agencies. There were, among other things, some incredible ranges across the province, depending upon where you are. Understand that you're talking about organizations like Big Brothers, the Boy Scouts of Canada, the Girl Guides and minor hockey associations. These are organizations that have scarce funds to begin with.

By virtue of my office canvassing some of these organizations, we learned some information that might be of some value or even some modest interest to people here. Last year, the Boy Scouts of Ontario did 10,000 record checks, according to them. It's an incredible number of record checks. They indicated that 10% of those record checks were done by the OPP, and I give credit to the OPP, because the OPP apparently does not charge anything for record checks. But the vast majority of people applying to volunteer with Boy Scouts are in urban areas where the OPP don't service the municipalities, where they're serviced by a municipal or regional police force. That's where you get into the disparities.

For instance, in Sudbury the charge by the Sudbury police is, fair enough, \$10 for a record check for a volunteer. But the charge goes up to \$16.05 for a prospective employee. Again, these are non-profit organizations. They work on very limited budgets and fundraising has become increasingly difficult for these organizations.

In Niagara region the cost of a background check by Niagara Regional Police for volunteers went up in the last four years, from \$10 to \$15. That's for a volunteer. The charge for an employee is \$45, one of the highest in the province.

In Oshawa, the Boy Scouts of Oshawa paid \$5 for a background check before 1995; after 1995, they paid \$10 for a background check.

In Windsor, volunteers pay nothing for their background checks; however, potential employees for a non-profit organization that works with youngsters or the elderly or other vulnerable people are charged \$35.

One of the interesting comments made by Big Brothers in Niagara region, for instance, was that a large

number of their volunteers come from among the student population. A large number of Niagara College students volunteer as Big Brothers. They have to pay their own fee for the background check, that new \$15 fee up from the \$10 historically.

Some policy changes were made in Niagara Falls as a result of the increasing fees being charged by police forces. Big Brothers tells us that at one point in its history it wanted a background check not just on the actual big brother applicant but on any person over 18 in that big brother's household, assuming that the child who was the little brother was going to be brought into that household. That indeed was an astute thing to do, but that policy has been abandoned because of the cost of record checks. What we've seen is an incredible disparity across the province in what's being charged.

Another thing that was of great concern, and I'm not going to name the organizations: We discovered a huge number of volunteer organizations that don't do record checks. Many volunteer organizations in hospitals and senior citizens' homes don't do record checks of volunteers. Many organizations with volunteers dealing with persons with disabilities don't do record checks. I don't want to accuse them of any sort of negligence in that regard. However, it seems unfortunate that, however sad and tragic it is, there are huge numbers of volunteers out there who aren't undergoing police record checks.

1010

My proposition is simple. I can tell the government members that they can expect, I believe, some incredible co-operation from the opposition. I can't speak for all opposition members, but I suspect it will be the case that there will little resistance to any proposition of a sex offender registry. There will undoubtedly be criticism about how broad and effective that will be, and the fact that it will be but one piece of a broader plan that's going to protect vulnerable people, but there is going to be little opposition to it.

If we're going to give effect to the verdict of the coroner's jury on Christopher Stephenson, we should be giving effect not just to the sex offender registry proposal; we should also be giving effect to the proposal that there be universal access to police record checks. It seems to me that's the only way to really guarantee it, because the trend is clearly that the fees being charged are increasing. That's the evidence; there's no two ways about it. I could get on to a partisan rant about why that's happening, but I won't because I think it's self-evident.

The fact is that if we clearly stated that no police force shall charge a non-profit organization seeking to screen an employee or a volunteer, you would get uniformity across the province and ensure that there's an incentive rather than a disincentive (1) for volunteers who are called upon to pay their own costs in applying, and (2) for agencies that can accumulate some incredible charges in the event that they have to screen volunteers and whose budgets may actually restrict or prevent them from considering new volunteer applications.

Big Sisters in Niagara region, for instance, has a huge demand right now for volunteers. I would hate to see the day, and I suspect we're close to it, when mere budgetary constraints say that we can't consider any more volunteer applications even though we need the volunteers, because of the fact that they're going to have to pay for each volunteer application by virtue of paying for the police records check.

It is my modest submission that this legislation would so much do the right thing by establishing across the board in Ontario that no volunteer, non-profit agency shall be charged a fee for a police record check. If we're serious about protecting kids or seniors or vulnerable people from predators, let's endorse the Christopher's Law proposal, but let's also make sure there is universal accessibility, at no cost, to police background records of potential employees or volunteers.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the private member's bill introduced by the member for Niagara Centre.

This government recognizes the important role that community organizations play in our society, and we are well aware of the contributions made by volunteers who serve these organizations. There are many programs in place that support both non-profit groups and their volunteers, including a number in the Ministry of the Solicitor General. For example, we support community groups across the province in their efforts to organize grassroots crime prevention programs.

At the same time, this government is committed to making Ontario a better place for all citizens to live, work and raise a family. Everyone has the right to feel safe on our streets, at their places of work and in their homes. We intend to keep our promises to the people of Ontario and to take positive action to ensure they can live free from fear of crime.

In other words, we must balance the very valuable contribution made by our volunteers with the need for a safe and secure society. For the vast majority of volunteers, police checks will be a minor inconvenience. But for the very small number who use the cloak of volunteerism to prey on vulnerable members of our society, the police check is an absolute and effective deterrent.

That leaves the question of whether police should have the right to charge for conducting background checks of volunteers. On that score, we believe it should be up to the local municipalities, the police services, to decide whether to make such charges and, if so, at what level. We object to this bill because it essentially removes the decision-making process from the police services when it comes to requests for police record checks.

Some police services have found it necessary to charge for background checks, while many others in our province are providing them free of charge. The Ontario Provincial Police, I'm very proud to say, has a policy of providing background checks for volunteers free of charge. As we've heard from the member from Niagara,

Windsor does, and my community, London, provides services free of charge.

Our government has faith in our police services and their professionalism. We believe police services should have the discretion of making these decisions at the local level. Municipalities can work with their police services, and it is inappropriate to interfere with that decision-making process by introducing this legislation, which is too prescriptive towards local police services and municipalities.

You might be interested in knowing that a consortium of leading voluntary sector organizations, with support from the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, is now implementing a recently announced strategy: the Ontario screening initiative. This initiative promotes community safety by helping the voluntary sector to understand the importance of screening, train resource people who will help community groups implement screening and make screening material widely available. This screening initiative will help community groups improve the way they select, train, place, supervise, evaluate and monitor both volunteers and paid staff to maximize protection of the public. I am confident that this initiative will go a long way to improving public safety.

The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police has worked with Volunteer Ontario, a province-wide organization established to advocate for volunteers in non-profit organizations and to help design guidelines to assist these agencies and organizations in maximizing public safety in the hiring of candidates for volunteer or paid positions.

However, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police also recognizes the need to charge for background checks for volunteers and for job applicants. The association based its recommendation on a time-and-motion analysis. Their estimates are that the average cost to provide a background check to their department is \$40. But this is not being proposed. Current fees are either non-existent, as we've heard, or extremely nominal. It is unreasonable for municipalities to recover the cost of providing this service on a user-pay basis. If prohibited from charging for police record checks, if prohibited from recovering the cost of staff and time of police services, they will be facing pressures of existing time and cost resources.

Background checks for screening volunteers is one element in protecting the public. However, employers and volunteer organizations recognize the need to employ other measures for screening and ongoing monitoring to fully protect their clients. All of these measures must work together to ensure public safety in this province.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I rise to support the bill that has been proposed by the member for Niagara Centre today. I think there's a recognition that the checks are most appropriate for various organizations of a volunteer nature in our communities across the province. The real question is, who shall assume the cost of those checks?

Many organizations struggle to obtain enough funds to carry out their mandate within an area. Many volunteer organizations have to hold their small raffles or perhaps have a bingo or have other ways—a turkey raffle, a ham roll—various ways of raising money for their organization. The demands on the various volunteer organizations today—particularly when governments at all levels appear to be moving out of certain areas of responsibility that they had previously assumed—is onerous, because they're called upon to do more and more and play a more significant role in terms of numbers and of their responsibilities within our society. That's why I become concerned when I feel that there might be a financial penalty being imposed upon them for this particular requirement by the provincial government. I think all of them would agree with the requirement. I think all members of this House agree that that was most appropriate.

1020

Our concern remains in allowing those volunteer organizations to be viable, not to have some of their funds diverted to a cost of this kind that is incurred by checks that are done by the police department.

On the other hand, we don't want to see our police services across this province penalized because they have to have more people on staff and more resources to carry out this responsibility. It seems to me that in the funding formula that is available for policing services in this province, it would be appropriate for the provincial government to take into account that new responsibility that police services might have across Ontario.

I'm sure they could develop an appropriate formula with the various police services boards across Ontario and their representatives meeting with the Solicitor General's department in consultation with the department of treasury—that is the Minister of Finance in this province. As a result a formula could be developed and municipalities might be compensated then for this task which is carried out by the police services.

It's a concern, particularly for many of us who served at the municipal level for a number of years, that more and more responsibilities of a costly nature are being placed on the backs of municipalities.

I know in my own area, for instance, that after the exchange of services between those that were previously provincial and those that today are municipal, our municipal government at the regional level, the regional municipality of Niagara, calculated that the difference was \$18 million. In other words, they had to assume a net \$18-million increase in financial responsibilities.

That, of course, has to be dealt with in a couple of ways. It has to be dealt with, first of all, by even further cuts to municipal services. I think we all know municipalities were among the first to start to make the cuts; because they were on the front line, they had to do so. They don't have the same taxing resources that senior levels of government have, so that's one factor. We saw some of what I would call essential services start to be eroded at the local level.

A second consequence would be that they had to raise taxes, or not lower taxes as much as they might have, because of assuming these new responsibilities from the province, I must say sometimes you had a combination of further cuts that municipalities had to make and some cost increases.

Another aspect of this is seeing user fees increase for various services provided by municipalities. As we know in this House, user fees tend to be most onerous on those who are least able to pay. Those in the lower-income brackets, those who do not have the financial resources, are always impacted more adversely by user fees than others, so I believe this bill tries to address that.

Again, to review, there is a recognition that this is an appropriate measure to go through, that there should be those appropriate checks taking place.

Second, we know that there's going to be a cost incurred and that it can be a cost which is difficult for police services to bear and a cost which is very difficult for volunteer organizations to bear.

The third aspect of it is having our province provide the necessary funding to be able to carry out this new responsibility which has been placed upon the municipalities and the police forces.

I think the bill addresses this particular aspect. The second step is that the province come forward to offer its assistance financially and otherwise in this regard.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to add my voice in support of this particular bill, and I want to do a couple of things. I want to go through what this bill is trying to attempt and some technical parts of the bill and also the reasons why we need such a bill. I think the member from Welland-Thorold—I believe the riding is still called Welland-Thorold? Niagara, whatever. One thing about this new House is that all the ridings are changed, and you've been used to calling somebody the member for Welland-Thorold for all these years. To get to the new title takes a bit of adjustment, even for Speakers, I notice; they tend to still call me the member from Timmins-Cochrane South or something.

What the member is attempting to do is to alleviate some of the financial burden that has been placed on volunteer organizations when they go out and do a criminal check on a potential volunteer who may be working with youngsters of the province or working with seniors. Unfortunately, there are I guess you can call them predators who like to associate themselves—and this is not the majority of people who volunteer, but it does happen—in volunteering with kids or with seniors, sometimes not for all the right reasons, and I'll just leave it at that.

Volunteer organizations want to do the right thing. They want to, first of all, make sure they provide good volunteer services for the communities they serve, and they want to make sure that the people who are doing the volunteering are there for all the right reasons and are going to be there in order to assist the particular organization to advance the goal or to provide the services they are trying to put forward.

What the member, Mr Kormos, is trying to do here is to say it is a financial burden and becoming increasingly so with the financial burdens municipalities find themselves having, with the lack of transfers and the down-loading from both federal and provincial governments; that it is becoming increasingly expensive for them to do business. I have seen that situation. Big Brothers and Big Sisters in my community have mentioned this particular issue to me. I know that other organizations, such as the people who do the Meals on Wheels programs and stuff, have mentioned it to me. They're saying it becomes a bit of a problem after a while. Every time a potential volunteer comes through the door and they've gone through the proper interview process, they've determined this person is a likely candidate to volunteer in the organization and to be given some responsibility, they're having to go out, in some cases, and pay to get criminal checks done on people.

I've got to say, as Mr Kormos has said, the Ontario Provincial Police have actually been quite good on this. That's where I've referred most of my people. I've said, "Go to the province," because the OPP, as far as I know, don't charge for those criminal checks, and I think that is a really good thing.

The problem is that some municipalities, when it comes to their municipal police forces, charge \$5, \$10 or \$15 per criminal check.

Mr Kormos: Or \$35 or \$40.

Mr Bisson: As much as \$35 or \$40, Mr Kormos is telling me. I know it is being charged, and it makes it a little bit more difficult for the member agency to go out and do the kind of screening they've got to do for their volunteers.

What Mr Kormos is trying to do by way of this bill is to say let's basically compare apples with apples and put ourselves in a situation where municipal police forces basically do the same thing as the provincial police force, which is not to charge when it comes to doing these particular checks.

I think this saves us money in the long run. I think the municipality not charging the user fee will encourage the volunteer organization to go out and do proper criminal checks and will free us from potentially having problems further down the road when it comes to an obstruction of justice or when it comes to an actual charge for something the volunteer might have done. We all know that costs money at the end of the day. So that \$5, \$10, \$15 or \$30 user fee that would be waived by way of this bill in the long run could be recuperated by way of dollars we're not going to spend further down the road when it comes to dealing with the victims of the abuse, the victims of the crime that's been perpetrated on them, and also on the part of the province in having to deal with the court aspects, the criminal aspects and the police investigations etc, what it costs to investigate the wrongdoing that might have been done.

I think the official word we were given by, I believe, the parliamentary assistant—the member from London-Fanshawe got up here, as all parliamentary assistants do

on private members' day, he was given a document, you know, "Here's the document." It came down, I believe, not from the minister. I don't believe the minister brought down the document; I think it's the bureaucracy. You guys came to government and, boy, you're going to take control of that bureaucracy. I'm finding out more and more the bureaucracy runs this government, and it really surprises the heck out of me. At least we as a government had some ability to deal with that. Here I see the parliamentary assistant coming in, he gets the official document from the ministry and he has to stand there as the parliamentary assistant and read, word for word, every part of the line he was given by the ministry, which was, "No, we're not going to do this."

Well, I know the Conservative backbenchers and the Conservative ministers of this crown are free individuals, I know that. I look at my good friends, Mr Wettlaufer and Mr Ouellette, and others, free-minded individuals all—
1030

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I mean that in all sincerity. We may not agree philosophically on where you're trying to take us, unlike the Liberals—they like where you're going, but they don't like how you're going to take them there. They just want the power to do it for themselves. I don't agree with where you guys are going, but you are free individuals, and I believe some of the free individuals in the Tory caucus agree with Mr Kormos and see this as actually a good thing. I believe that because I know my good friend Mr Wettlaufer especially would not stand up in this House and vote in opposition to this bill, because I know he cares about this. I know he, as do all of us in this Legislature, wants to make sure we do the proper thing when it comes to making sure our volunteer agencies have the kinds of volunteers who do the work out there for our communities for free and making sure we know, as much as humanly possible, that those volunteers are not going to utilize their positions for the wrong reasons.

I'm not going to go through all the examples, because they are disgusting. We're all aware of what has happened in minor hockey, and we're aware of what has happened in other organizations. We're also aware of some elder-abuse issues that have happened in regard to seniors. I don't want to go through the examples, because I think enough said; we know that goes on. What we're trying to do by way of this bill is to allow the volunteer organizations to go out there and do the kind of screening that needs to be done to make sure that when volunteers come forward, we, as much as humanly possible, have checked into the ability of that person not utilizing that volunteer position in order to advance some perverted fantasies he or she might have or whatever it is they're up to. We're going to make it easy for the organizations to deal with it.

I want to talk about one technical aspect of the bill. I think it's important to mention, because I know government members are very busy and don't always have the time to come into the House and read the bill in detail. I

don't bemoan that. I was a very busy member when we were in government. You get all these cabinet briefing notes, you sit on parliamentary committees and take all those trips and junkets where you've got to travel around the world at government expense to represent the government. I understand it's a very—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Not you, Mr Wettlaufer. I know you're not like that, but I do know how busy it gets.

For those of you who have not had the chance to read this bill, I just want to make one point because I think it is very, very important to make this point, and it is under section 3 of the bill, in case members wonder if this gives the volunteer agency some ability to go out there, willy-nilly, and do criminal checks on anybody they want and to abuse their power in some kind of way. Not at all. The bill deals with that under section 3.

Basically what it says is, "This act does not authorize a police records check that is not otherwise authorized by law." Simply put, it means to say there has to be a waiver that's signed by the volunteer organization. Somebody takes responsibility from within the organization to make sure that this is being done for the right reasons, and the police in the end have the right to say: "Hey, listen, we think you might be abusing your power. We want to investigate this." There are some checks and balances that the member, Mr Kormos, has put into this bill. The fine legal mind that he is, I must say, he has looked on both sides of this, and I think it's very important to say that.

Again, I want to say to my good—I won't say "my good friends in the Conservative caucus"—acquaintances in the Conservative caucus that I don't agree philosophically with most of the places you're going. I think your legislation, by and large, goes in the wrong direction on most aspects, especially when it comes to economic development, but that's for another debate.

But I do know there are free-minded individuals within the Tory caucus. I look at Mr Wettlaufer, Mr Ouellette, Mrs Marland, Mr Tilson, individuals all, honourable members—

The Acting Speaker: The member would know we should refer to other members by their riding and not their proper name.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, I used to know what all their ridings were, but they all got changed. I'm such a busy member, critic for everything in northern Ontario, having to do all my things, I haven't got time to come and read the chart. So, please, if I mentioned your name, it was not meant as an insult, because I think you're all honourable members.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: It's still Mississauga South? Well, there you go, I do know one of them, as it turns out.

I want to say to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin—see, I got yours right—that these members in the Conservative caucus I think support what Mr Kormos is trying to do. I certainly hope, and I somehow suspect, that a number of Conservative caucus members will

stand in support of this legislation, because they understand what the member from Niagara something—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Niagara. There we go, I just learned a second one. They understand that the member from Niagara, Mr Kormos, is not advancing a partisan bill; he is trying to advance a bill that responds to an actual problem that exists in all our communities.

I would say to the members opposite that I look forward and I anticipate that they will stand up and vote in favour.

Je veux seulement dire au membre d'Algoma-Manitoulin, comme on dit en français, que les volontaires de nos communautés jouent un rôle clé. Parfois les volontaires sont la seule réponse dans la communauté capables d'aider et d'assister avec beaucoup des problèmes qu'il y a dans nos communautés et d'offrir beaucoup de services qu'il n'y existent pas.

Je regarde les communautés comme Mattice, Jogues, Moose Factory et autres. Ces communautés-là n'ont pas un gros montant de services provinciaux ou fédéraux à leur disposition pour répondre au besoin de leur communauté—pas comme la grosse ville de Toronto ou la grosse ville d'Ottawa. Les volontaires jouent un rôle qui est clé dans ces communautés-là et c'est ça qui bâtit l'esprit de la communauté.

Ce projet de loi que M. Kormos met en avant est pour dire que si on fait l'ouvrage comme volontaire, ces gens-là ont besoin de s'assurer que les volontaires sont du monde qui ont été vérifiés quand ça vient à des records de la police, pour s'assurer que ces individus sont clairs, n'ont pas de problèmes et ne sont pas là pour les méchantes raisons.

Je veux laisser le restant du temps qu'il y a sur l'horloge pour mon bon ami M. Kormos, le membre de Niagara, pour être capable d'avoir encore une couple minutes à la fin pour finir son débat.

Je vous remercie monsieur le Président, membre d'Algoma-Manitoulin.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): Thank you, Mr Speaker. May I first congratulate you on your election as Deputy Chair. I know you're going to serve the House well.

I would like to speak very briefly in favour of the principle of this bill, which I think is a sound one, but I'd like to raise concerns about a couple of the details.

One detail involves the definition of the organizations that are covered in the bill. I think there's a case to be made that it may be too narrow. I hope, should this bill proceed, that the definition will be looked at with a view to seeing whether it covers all the organizations that might properly be covered under such an initiative.

The second concern I would like to raise is, is it necessary to mandate this for the municipalities? Are they going to do the right thing on their own? I think maybe we should give them a little time to see whether or not they get the clear message that I think does come

from the people of this province as a whole, which is that charities should not be burdened with this kind of cost.

Other than those two reservations, I think the bill heads in the right direction, and I hope the House will give it favourable consideration.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I too want to rise in support of the bill that has been put forth by the member for Niagara Centre. As a former member of a police services board, we had to deal with this issue. Police services boards have been treated much like any other department in the city, and with all the downloading that has taken place to municipalities, dating back to the cuts that have occurred since 1995, police services boards have been forced to have to do more with less.

One of the issues we had to deal with as a police services board was this very situation. What we found was that, as a police services board, we were getting a number of inquiries from organizations wanting us to do background checks, whether that was Boy Scouts, Big Brothers, block parents and so on. Because we found that it was taking so much of our time, we had to initiate a fee. That caused a hue and outcry from those organizations because of the cost. They too have been affected by downloading, and they don't have the support they previously had and they have to do more fundraising. It's something that is very important. We need to ensure that the individuals involved with these organizations do have a very clean background; we've got to ensure that's the case.

At the same time, I don't believe we can leave that burden, that financial cost, on the backs of the municipalities. There's been too much downloading, and to just go and say to the municipalities that, "You will do this free of charge," I don't think is fair. It's just another form of downloading. I think it's incumbent on this government and this province that we offer financial support to these municipalities, that we ensure that the individuals do have these good, clean backgrounds.

I want to commend the member for his efforts in bringing this forward, because we all recognize the important role these groups and organizations play in our community. I just wanted to speak in support of that and thank the member for his efforts.

1040

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join the debate on Bill 9 that's been brought forward by the member from Niagara Centre. I think the act's title speaks to what he's trying to achieve here. It says it's An Act respecting the cost of checking the police records of individuals who may work for certain non-profit service agencies. The non-profit agencies that have been targeted by the member are geared toward youth, also towards seniors and disability groups.

I join with the member from London with respect to the definition of "agency." It may be too narrow, because what we want to deal with and encourage as a principle is for non-profit agencies to make sure that the volunteers who work for them are within the principles of that

organization and are free of any criminal record that would be covered by this particular piece of legislation. It's important that we look at that particular definition with respect to making sure we're covering off the principle of what we're trying to achieve.

I think the other principle that the member from Niagara Centre is trying to accomplish here is encouraging the agencies to have police record checks occur with respect to their volunteers. That's something we shouldn't try to discourage as per the member from St Thomas's diatribe with respect to downloading. This has nothing to do with downloading. This has to do with making sure that non-profit agencies have the wherewithal to make sure that their organization's principles are carried out by the volunteers that decide to join them.

Quite frankly, there is only one taxpayer. We should just basically focus on it with respect to how we're going try to accomplish this. When you deal with other communities—for example, in my area we have OPP in the Simcoe county area and Orillia, New Tecumseth, Springwater and Essa. From what I find out from the member from Niagara Centre, the OPP do police checks for non-profit agencies, but for free. We need to have sort of an equal playing field, and I think that's one of the matters he's trying to accomplish here, with respect to municipalities where there is in fact a fee charged to these agencies.

The cost-saving principle, what we're trying to accomplish here, certainly is designed to encourage these agencies to have their volunteers pass the test that they think is important for them to be able to continue as volunteers.

The cost saving is strictly an issue that we have the one taxpayer, and we want to encourage non-profit agencies to go out and have these police record checks performed and they want to make sure they have the best volunteers there. I don't think this type of fee sits well with respect to accomplishing that purpose. The member from Niagara Centre is trying to accomplish that goal through this particular piece of legislation. Obviously, he has researched it very well, and it is an area that can result in tremendous cost to a particular agency that does rely on a lot of volunteers. We all know those types of agencies that would rely on volunteers: Big Brothers, for example, Big Sisters, associations that deal with the physically disabled, and obviously seniors' groups.

I think this is a good piece of legislation. It may have to be fine-tuned with respect to the definition of "agency" to ensure that the cost-saving principle is adhered to.

I'm pleased to have spoken on this bill. I'll sit down now, but I voice my support for it.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm going to speak in support of this bill. I'd like to speak to it from my background as a foster parent and a CAS board member for some 24 years.

There are a lot of people in this province who volunteer but have probably not recognized or are even aware that they're volunteering. At foster parents, we believe very much that we're volunteering and appreciate

the privilege. We receive compensation for it to cover expenses, and no more. That's fair. There are costs associated for new foster parents to get a police check, and I'm supporting this bill that would reduce that cost to people who want to serve the community and want to serve the children in the community.

But I hope the police forces can be a little liberal in their interpretation of who are volunteers. I say that because when children come into our family, some will stay for two or three months, some will stay for 10 years, and some will stay forever with us, but whether they're there for a short time or whether they're there permanently, they in fact become part of our family. For many of these children, they have no other family and they view our parents as their grandparents and our natural children as their brothers and sisters.

But under the current law, if my wife and I were going to be away for a day and we wanted one of our parents to come into our home and stay with the children, they have to get a police check. So they have to spend money to help look after the children that the provincial government has responsibility for. Indeed, if they want to go to a cottage and stay overnight with relatives, they have to have a police check. I guess the ultimate, that we find rather funny as foster parents, is that if one of our natural children who is in their 20s or 30s, who was born and raised in our home with these foster children, moves away and then comes back and wants to look after the children for the night, they have to go down and get a police check and pay for it. Some of our natural children find it rather funny that they have to pay to stay in their own home. I hope there can be recognition that although they're not recognized directly as foster parents or volunteers, there can be accommodation that they not pay.

I could not support police checks more, but I believe this is a step in the right direction to provide the opportunity for more people to be involved, to serve the community, without having to pay for the privilege.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I also would like to congratulate you on your appointment to the Chair.

I'd like to join with my colleagues the members for London-Fanshawe and Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford in regard to the concerns expressed regarding the definition of organizations and services. However, on this issue, having gone through it just last week—I went through the check for providing a service for my son's hockey team—I found it very appropriate to know that the individuals and the parents who are participating in it had to go through this process.

That's the concern I have, that the process is evolving right now. What happens in future days when there is a change during the period when—say one of the adults helping out with the team has a problem during the time from when the process starts to the end. Where is the requirement for notification of an infraction or something that's taken place? Right now everything's clear with

those individuals, but during the time those individuals or students or kids are exposed to it, there may be a change in the obligations that are put on some service. As I'm saying, the process is evolving.

The member's bill hits it right on when we need to look at some of these aspects of the costs that are incurred by individuals. Locally, I know that the parks association that I'm working through volunteered to cover the cost for that. They have funds for it and they do fundraising for those aspects.

Some of the areas in regard to the bill, though—there are a lot of volunteers and there's a tendency for the same individuals to be providing the same volunteer service. At this time of year it's usually hockey or ringette or, as the case may be, figure skating, where they're helping out. Then in the spring there's soccer and there's baseball, and the same individuals are required possibly to have an expense incurred over and over and over again.

1050

I'm working with an individual, Scott Montpetit, in my riding on this very issue about the cost involved to people within the region of Durham. Apparently there are about 2,500 volunteers who may be subject to this cost, which amounts in the riding of Oshawa or the region of Durham to about \$25,000 to \$50,000. So where does the cost get put and who would have to pick it up and how will it play out are the big questions.

The member has raised a good issue. I think the volunteer organizations, including myself, are very supportive of the issue. I will be voting in favour of the member's bill, to send it for some more review and definition refining on the clubs and organizations that are involved.

As well, the duplication of events: What happens when one volunteer—for example, in the spring, kids' activities get very busy; they have the scouting movements and the soccer and the baseball that take place—may be expected to provide the services a number of times. Possibly looking at cost-effectiveness or one-time fees for an association that is able to cover the cost may help out in that situation. As I said, it is evolving and we expect to see a lot of changes.

Also, the number of participants that are involved: On my son's hockey team, for example, there are five mandatory, but when it comes time to practise on the ice, there are about 10, 12 on the ice. Who is to say how many should be subject to that specific need or cost? I think they were possibly looking at some defining of how many people per organization is a free fee and how many additional ones may be required to pay some costs in there.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I think the last speaker put his finger on it more than anything else I've heard here this morning. The issue is not so much whether or not these checks are necessary. I think we've all agreed on that. It's hard to believe that 15 years ago these checks weren't done except in very unusual situations, but there is general agreement now that these checks ought to be done.

But once you start talking about whether or not one organization can pay and another one can't pay, you're going to get involved in a whole variety of issues about seeing the financial records of organizations and things along that line, which in my opinion is totally unnecessary.

What this bill is really addressing is who is going to pay for these checks. That's what this bill is all about, not that the checks are necessary. They are necessary, but who is going to pay for them?

To have a volunteer organization pay for these checks, in my opinion, doesn't make any sense. Volunteer organizations rely on donations out there, and for them to utilize their money for these kinds of purposes, to my way of thinking, is totally inappropriate.

On the other hand, we also have to be realistic about it. This is a great inconvenience and could potentially be a great cost, particularly to smaller police forces. That's really what the issue is. There are many small police forces that are overloaded with these kinds of requests.

I would suggest that once this bill goes to committee some sort of mechanism would be worked out. Since it's in the provincial interest, not only in the local interest, that these checks be done, since it's in the interests of all of us, there ought to be resources made available by the provincial government to make sure these smaller communities that otherwise couldn't afford to do these checks will be able to do that. I think that's really the essence of what this bill is talking about and I think those kinds of details can be worked out in committee.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'll fill in the time, Mr Speaker.

I'm delighted to hear debate on both sides of the House with respect to the bill presented by Mr Kormos. I also would like to add that there are municipalities where indeed they find difficulties more than others. This is due to the changes that take place in the various communities. I can speak for Metro here, where I feel more at home with some of the issues, and this one as well. We have dealt on a number of occasions with issues such as this one. I think the bill as presented indeed deserves to have a second look, to be looked at in more depth, and indeed have justice, if you will, to the content of the bill as well.

From a municipal point of view, I have to tell you that often municipalities receive complaints from the various organizations which don't have the funding they used to have to do a number of things, provide the services in the local municipality that they normally did and continue to do.

On the other hand, the police have their own problem with funding cuts and stuff like that. If you speak to some of the municipalities—for example, Metro—they will say: "We need more policemen. You're complaining about the services we provide. We need more help. We need more funding." How do they provide those services? Exactly like that, with proper funding.

To add to that I think would be a strain on both the providers, those agencies that normally people in need go

to, and our police forces, which are under stress and strain on a continuous basis.

I think the bill as presented today deserves attention and I congratulate the member.

Mr Kormos: First let me thank the participants for their comments to this bill and their generosity. I guess the parliamentary assistant wasn't as generous as others, but I understand. As my colleague Mr Bisson indicated, I understand you've got a job to do; fair enough.

When we're talking about policing, I also understand that it costs money for police to process record checks. Of course it does. It costs police to attend to your neighbour's home when there's been a B and E too. Everything that police do costs money.

We as taxpayers—and I for one am prepared. I say yes. As a taxpayer—my views are shared by the people from my community and I think most Ontarians—am I prepared to pay for police to do record checks to ensure that, among others, we could protect kids to whatever extent we can so they don't become victims of the incredible atrocities against children that we've witnessed in our province, even in the recent past? I'm prepared to make that sort of investment as a taxpayer. I think that's part of policing should be in a community.

I don't think one should have to pay, with all due respect to you, a user fee for that service, any more than one should have to pay a user fee for the police attending at your house when it's been broken into and entered. In my view, they're parallels. It's the same kind of policing. It's the same kind of service that police should be able to expect from their police forces.

I told you I was mortified, I was just scared out of my boots, by the number of agencies—and for obvious reasons I'm not going to name them, but do some checks in your own communities—that don't do record checks. This is not yet even now a widespread phenomenon. It is in some sectors of volunteer services, but I was frightened when I discovered some very specific areas where there was a trend not to do records checks, where that simply hadn't become part of the process yet. I think that poses great danger and potential risk.

On the scope of the definition of agencies, of course I agree. This is a grossly imperfect effort to get this down here for first reading. I think we should all be in a position where we should be encouraging the access by volunteer and nonprofit agencies to their police forces for the purpose of record checks, and to do that we should be eliminating the fees to ensure that nobody is deterred, that there are no disincentives to utilizing record checks.

You spoke of the problem, of the fact that if you do a record check by virtue of wanting to work with minor hockey, you've got to get a second record check when you want to work with Boy Scouts or with some other agency, or the third one or the fourth one. The reality is that in most of our communities, when you find a volunteer in one service you find him or her in half a dozen other services as well. That's the nature of the beast. That simplify amplifies the problem for either that individual or for that agency.

I repeat again the observation by Big Brothers of Niagara that Niagara College students provided one of their biggest single sources of volunteers, students who were being called upon in this case to pay the fee out of their own pocket. I think we should be doing things to encourage students like Niagara College students to volunteer their time in things like Big Brothers and to not have the imposition of a user fee for the purpose of a criminal record search put upon them.

I hope members join together in this bill. I hope this bill has an opportunity to have some consideration in committee so it can be fine-tuned and have some responses from various organizations, if necessary, but I think if we're going to give effect to things like the coroner's inquest, the verdict of the jury into the death of Christopherson Stephenson, this this piece of legislation, along with other pieces of legislation, should be passed. I call upon members to do what they think is the right thing in this case.

1100

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I move the following resolution:

Be it resolved that this House strongly urges federal Justice Minister Anne McClellan to revamp federal animal abuse laws and implement the following recommendations:

(1) That penalties for animal abuse be increased from the current maximum of six months imprisonment to a maximum of five years and that the law allow for a fine much greater than the current \$2,000.

(2) That persons convicted of intentional animal cruelty be subject to a possible lifetime ban on owning animals.

(3) That persons convicted of intentionally injuring an animal be required to repay the cost of care for that animal.

(4) That the Criminal Code be updated, simplified and consolidated, with regard to animal cruelty.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Galt moves private member's resolution number 1. Pursuant to standing order 95(c)(i), the honourable member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and congratulations to you, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, on being appointed Deputy Chair. All the best.

I also welcome in the gallery children who are here today from Grafton public school, interested in this particular resolution.

I'm certainly very pleased to bring forward this resolution to discourage crimes against animals. As a veterinarian I have maintained a lifetime interest in animal welfare. While the vast majority of people love their pets and treat their animals with respect, sometimes animals are treated in the most horrendous fashion. This was certainly brought home recently in an instance that occurred in my riding. Nikita, the one-year-old Rottweiler, was

dragged behind a truck in Bewdley and suffered extensive injuries. While this matter is still before the courts, it underlines the need to stiffen penalties for those who would abuse animals.

Since the Nikita incident, my background has made me a lightning rod for people who want tougher penalties for animal abuse. I have received many letters and petitions from concerned and outraged citizens across the province, all with a common theme. These are the letters and petitions, not few in number by any means.

These people want penalties for animal abuse to be increased from the current maximum of 6 months imprisonment to a maximum of at least five years. They want much greater fines, to an unlimited maximum, levied on animal abusers than the \$2,000 now allowable. They want persons convicted of intentional animal cruelty to be subject to a possible lifetime ban on owning animals. They want persons convicted of intentionally injuring an animal to be required to repay the cost of care for that animal. Finally, they want the Criminal Code of Canada to be updated, simplified and consolidated with regard to animal cruelty.

Mr Speaker, you will recognize that these themes form the basis of the resolution I am putting forward today. Since the summer, I have been going through extensive research into animal cruelty laws, and have found that the general penalty in SPCA acts across Canada—up to three months imprisonment and up to a \$5,000 fine for a first offence, and up to six months in jail and up to a \$10,000 fine for subsequent offences—may not be adequate to discourage people from doing cruel acts to animals.

I have concluded that the most efficient way of accomplishing the goals of greater protection for those who cannot speak for themselves and discouraging that small minority who would abuse animals, is through the existing Criminal Code. I discourage putting penalties into our own SPCA act, because that would duplicate what is already in the Criminal Code, and I see that the answer is in the Criminal Code.

As a result, I wrote to the federal justice minister, Anne McClellan, in September, asking her to follow through on her commitment to improved animal protection laws. I'm disappointed to say that to date I have received no response from the minister. How can average citizens, like the many who have written to me, hope to have their voices heard when the minister will not even respond to an MPP who represents thousands of people?

This resolution, if passed, becomes a formal position of the Ontario Legislature. It is also a way, so to speak, to hold the federal minister's feet to the fire. It raises public awareness that cruelty to animals is indeed a crime that will not be tolerated in a civil society.

I have often said that prevention is certainly far more important than penalizing people for acts. There's no question that the various humane societies in Ontario have been doing an admirable job of making the public aware that cruelty to animals is not acceptable, but more is needed.

A discussion paper was released more than a year ago, back in 1998, looking at the options for increased

penalties for animal abuse. I certainly give the federal government credit for releasing this paper. However, discussion is not enough. The time has come to act. Today I'm calling on Anne McClellan, the federal justice minister, to make good on her promises of tougher animal cruelty laws. In speeches as recent as August, the minister made a commitment to that act. But in a call to her office just yesterday, I confirmed again that no action had been taken. I hope the members of this Legislature, regardless of political affiliation, will join with me to stand in front of those who cannot speak for themselves. They will find themselves in good company.

At this time I would like to recognize the efforts of our local humane society in Northumberland, in particular with regard to the Nikita incident. It will give you some indication of just how strongly people feel about animal abuse. Since the Nikita story received widespread coverage in the media, the Northumberland humane society has raised almost \$60,000 in the Nikita fund. This money has been used to pay for Nikita's care and will be made available to care for any other abandoned animal that has been abused in Northumberland. That is a strong and lasting legacy for a young Rottweiler and for the people who chose to stand in front of her. I'm very proud to call these people my constituents.

I have been in several discussions with the honourable David Tsubouchi, the Solicitor General. He has indicated that he is interested in setting up a task force to consult on the need for changes in our Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. This task force will be struck in the near future and will be consulting before the end of this year.

In closing, I'd like to point out that animal abuse is a terrible thing. I'm told by constituents that the penalties must be put in proper perspective, that they cannot be in excess of the type we have for spousal abuse or child abuse or elder abuse. I think the type of penalties being proposed for the Criminal Code are in order.

It's also interesting to note that when animal abuse occurs, some signs come up. One is that the perpetrators become desensitized if they're not caught and penalized for it, and further acts are carried out in the future, some that become more extensive than the one at hand. The other is that it can be a symptom of other acts of cruelty that these people are carrying out and that certainly should be checked for. This cruelty ranges from random acts of violence against neighbourhood pets to such atrocities as nailing kittens to the floor, dousing them with gasoline and then setting them on fire.

As a matter of fact, just yesterday another cat was mutilated in Toronto, the eighth in a series of bizarre attacks on domestic animals in this city. These are the offenders we have in mind today. People convicted of such vicious crimes against innocent pets must pay for those actions as a punishment and as a deterrent to others who might consider similar unspeakable acts.

I ask today for the support of my colleagues to ensure that changes are made to the Criminal Code in a timely fashion.

There is no question in my mind, and in those of many of my constituents in Northumberland, that the hallmark of a civil society is a service to others. This is a service we can all perform here today to help protect the loving pets cherished by so many people in our society.

1110

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): It's a great pleasure for me as the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale to stand today and join in this debate.

I would like to start by congratulating the member for Northumberland not only for the bill he has before the House today, but also for his luck in having it drawn so early. It is my hope that we can take advantage of that timing by moving forward and putting some pressure on legislators and legislatures to move forward and enact this type of harsher penalty.

I did find one point of some concern that I would like to raise, and that is that the member spent quite a lot of time focusing on what I think he referred to as inaction on the part of the federal government, and yet later in his remarks he mentioned that he had been in contact with his own minister, Mr Tsubouchi, who talked about a task force. We know that in the last House, Bill 153 was presented to us. Your government has a choice, as well, to move forward with initiatives that would strengthen penalties in this area, and I encourage you to keep the heat on within your own caucus and government to move forward in that way.

I represent a riding that is very different from the member for Northumberland's. Mine is an urban riding, while his is principally rural. Yet a huge proportion of the residents of my riding have pets—a lot of cats, where perhaps dogs are more prevalent in his community. I stand with him in support of moving forward and strengthening penalties towards pets, who are of course very important and play important roles within families.

In addition to the case the member mentioned that took place in Northumberland, we have seen so much written here in the city of Toronto about gratuitous violence that has been perpetrated by sick individuals on harmless and defenceless pets, particularly cats. It is my hope that by moving on this issue today, we can help to put pressure again on governments to move forward and strengthen penalties in that area.

The one thing I would like to add by way of comment is that I think we also need to encourage, in this discussion and others surrounding issues like this, the notion of personal responsibility. Too often, harm comes to pets not only from humans but from other pets as well. In the city of Toronto, where we live in a more dense and urban environment, too often cases are brought to my attention where dogs, as an example, are let off their leashes. People are unable to control them, and those dogs are inflicting violence on other dogs. In an untimely case in my riding, a dog, Sandy Bear, was off her leash in Moss Park and was lost by her owners, Chris Pritchard and Tracey Young, to another dog that was not being taken care of in a responsible fashion by its owner. We

also see the whole evolution towards the breeding of dogs as offensive tools, and this is a concern for those of us living in urban areas. So I think we need to be sensitive to the issues of personal responsibility as they affect pets.

Too often, it seems to me, animals are brought into households without proper consideration of the kinds of responsibilities the owners have towards those pets. As we debate this issue, I would like to add those issues so there is consideration of the notion of personal responsibility, that that is indeed brought to bear, and that individuals who bring pets into their households take responsibility for the proper care of their pets, but also that they take responsibility for the actions of those pets when they're let off leashes and into other environments.

In closing, just to recap, I'll certainly be supporting the member opposite and look forward to working to see that this House, and others, move forward and enact tougher penalties so that people can take more responsibility, and when they don't, they can be punished in a proper fashion.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): That's right, it is Niagara Centre. Thank you very much.

I, too, rise in support of the resolution. Some people might recall that I used to get people angry in here; a couple of times I got people angry here. One of the occasions was when I talked about Charlie the beagle. Charlie was my beagle. Charlie has been dead now for three years, I think. Quite frankly, I probably wasn't the best animal companion because I was the victim of bouts of anthropomorphism. There were times when I would talk to the dog, and I'm sure there were people who suspected that more than a little bit of my political positioning was based on advice from the dog. Mind you, I probably could have done far worse.

Down in Niagara region, some of you folks may know Bernie Webb, who was the inspector-director of the SPCA down there. Bernie is retired now, but I worked on a lot of matters with Bernie Webb over the course of quite a few years. This just gives me an opportunity to praise him, because Bernie was an incredibly committed advocate for the well-being of animals, and he worked incredibly well with members of the community to assist community members who had animals and ensure the mutual well-being of both.

In fact, the humane society gave me a break more than a few times because Charlie was a beagle. He's the only dog I know that got expelled from dog-training school. I recall asking a dog trainer at one point if he'd help me train my dog and he said, "Sure, I would." I'd been referred to him by another friend who had Labs that did field trials. He said, "What kind of dog have you got?" I said, "It's a beagle." He said, "Does it bark?" I said, "Yes." He said, "It's trained."

The problem is that beagles follow their nose. If Charlie got off his leash or chain outside, he'd be gone two or three miles, four miles away, and I had to bail him

out a few times. But then others have done the same for me. Eventually, it got to the point where somebody would call the humane society and say, "There's this very tired beagle that has been out running for hours lying asleep in my front yard," and the humane society wouldn't bother sending somebody out; they'd just call me and tell me to go get my dog up on Fitch Street or Northland Manor or wherever it was he happened to be.

I share, and I hope we all share, the incredible shock and repugnance at news reports of incredible treatment of animals. Nothing good can be said. These are sick, twisted people.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): Low-lifes.

Mr Kormos: That's about as low as you can go.

Mr Galt wants to make sure—and I share with him. We're not trying to trivialize the vicimization of people, for instance. We realize we have horrendous problems in dealing with protecting people from violence and abuse. But I am convinced that the same sort of people who would display violence and horrible indifference to animals' pain would also be inclined to be violent, with great indifference to human pain. I have no doubt about that. I haven't got any psychiatric or psychological studies here, but I don't think you've got to be a rocket scientist to make that kind of connection.

It was because of the resolution that I took a look at the Criminal Code. We really are talking about sections under part XI, cruelty to animals, that are incredibly dated, I suppose in part because they date back to an era when there was a literal sense of property in an animal, that you could do whatever you wanted with it. It was yours to do what you wished. I know it has been incredibly frustrating for many judges in many courts, because the "unnecessary suffering" section is at the end of the day a mere summary conviction offence. That puts an incredible limit on a judge's power to impose penalties.

1120

One of the most important parts here is the lifetime ban on ownership of animals. There is current provision for a ban on owning animals, but the problem is that it's a relatively limited period of time: It's a period not exceeding two years. Sorry, but at the end of the day—again, we don't want to prejudge any cases that are before the courts—if some of the allegations that we've read about in the papers regarding treatment of animals are proven to be true, I don't have any qualms about telling that person that he or she shouldn't be allowed to own any animal ever again. "Sorry, you've crossed the line; you've gone beyond anything that could be tolerated," as you pointed out, "in a civil society."

This is not a difficult exercise; this is a matter of merely rewriting the sections under part XI, putting the bill before Parliament. Their rules are perhaps not quite as restrictive as this government's rules, but their rules are pretty restrictive as well in terms of their capacity to control debate. I quite frankly don't see why any opposition member in the federal Parliament would

engage in any lengthy debate or require any lengthy committee process. The fact is that Mr Galt's proposal, which I suspect is shared by the vast number of Ontarians, if not all of us, could become law in a New York minute. It's simply a matter of political will. I find it incredibly frustrating, as I think a whole lot of people do, that governments can't respond that way. I understand a little bit why they can't. There's all sorts of stuff going on, politicking and machinations, and people's attention diverted.

I don't know if you referred to other provinces, other legislatures that have made similar calls upon the federal government to do this very sort of thing. But I trust that you, Mr Galt, with the assistance of your staff, will ensure that other legislatures, should this resolution pass—and I suspect it will—are advised of that fact so that like-minded people in other provincial parliaments can do the same thing and can, if they wish, do it in relatively short order. That, I suspect—I hope—would be reasonably persuasive with Ms McLellan, the federal justice minister.

This is one of those things where—what more is there to say? I mentioned Bernie Webb and our local humane society, and the incredible work they've done with incredibly limited resources. The municipal support for these people has at the very least been kept stagnant, if not become more restricted. City councillors or regional councillors tend not to understand that animal control, which involves animal protection as well, is very much a public health and safety issue, that it's very much in the interests of the community to have a well-funded, well-supported humane society/SPCA with good staff, staff who work hard. These are the folks who, when you've got that skunk under your front porch, crawl in there and do the unpleasant task that most of us are reluctant to do. That's why we call the humane society, because we don't want to do it; if we were prepared to do it, we wouldn't call the humane society. The fact is we call the humane society.

Beyond that, when you see these incredible incidents of violence to animals, psychotic physical abuse of animals, these are the people who have to, more often than not with very limited resources, engage in investigations and undertake the prosecutions themselves. I don't know what happens in your jurisdiction, but in many jurisdictions it's the humane society itself, the SPCA, that does the actual prosecution. It's only in the more serious cases that the crown attorney's office, for instance, undertakes it. That puts an incredible burden on the resources of the SPCA or local humane society.

So we support the resolution. Again, I encourage Mr Galt to make sure other legislatures know about its passage today, move quickly on it. Obviously amendments to the Criminal Code aren't going to assist courts in dealing with cases that are already before the courts, but some acknowledgement publicly that the price of poker has gone up for people who are going to be violent and abusive and who are going to mistreat animals should have, hopefully, some impact. Again, the one

single goal, if for nothing else, of permitting a court to impose bans on ownership beyond two years clearly would serve the best interests of all our communities.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): It is an honour to rise in the House this morning to speak in support of the member from Northumberland on his resolution concerning crimes against animals. This is obviously something that everyone should be concerned about. All of us were appalled at the recent media reports indicating that several domestic animals had been killed in the most obscene manner. This summer in Toronto, as referenced earlier, several cats were found mutilated in a senseless, brutal and unprovoked attack on these defenceless animals. Also this summer, there were cases of people severely injuring their dogs by dragging them behind their vehicles.

In a civilized society, this type of behaviour simply cannot and should not be tolerated. As a dog owner and breeder, I have been particularly involved in addressing this issue. Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of interviewing on my local cable program Victoria Earle, who is the chief executive officer of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I'd like to pay particular attention to the fact that she, along with members of that organization, is here today joining us. I'm very pleased that they were able to come and hear the kind of support that is here in this House for this resolution. I certainly to take this opportunity to thank this organization for the outstanding work that has been done over many, many years in protecting our animals.

I also had the pleasure on September 20 of this year of opening Violence Prevention Week at the police headquarters here in Toronto. Again, I thank Victoria Earle for this invitation.

I must say how appropriate it is that this resolution is being brought forward this week, during Crime Prevention Week. I would go back to comments made a moment ago by the member from Niagara Centre where he made reference to the fact that intuitively he believes there is a link—I want to assure the member that it is a well-known link—between violent crime against animals and violent crime against humans. Several studies have shown that animal cruelty is associated with increasingly violent behaviour and is an indicator of the potential threat of continuing violence, abuse and criminal activity.

Most important, in a study done by the Ontario SPCA in 1998 with women who have left abusive situations, 61% of these had pets abused or killed by their partners, 43% had pets threatened by their partners and 48% reported that concerns over safety of their pets prevented them from leaving the abusive situation sooner. However, in Canada what is the penalty for such a crime? Under the Criminal Code of Canada, most charges relate to the wrongful infliction of pain and suffering or the wilful neglect of an animal. For this type of crime, as we've already heard, there is a maximum fine of \$2,000, six months imprisonment or both, together with the possibility of being banned from owning animals for two

years. Obviously, by the recent examples, these penalties are not stopping this kind of behaviour.

1130

In the United States there is a recognition of the link between animal cruelty and violent behaviour towards humans. Many American states have addressed this by strengthening their animal cruelty laws. However, this has not been the case in Canada. After years of contemplation, the federal government has promised to introduce amendments. This still has not been done. The member from Northumberland has demonstrated leadership on this issue in presenting this resolution to this House. This resolution sends an unequivocal message to our federal government.

It is a privilege to have a pet. Pets are recognized and accepted as important members of our families. They bring us both joy and comfort to our sometimes hectic lives. They also play very important roles as special-needs dogs, providing pet therapy by visitation and a host of other important social roles. Ontarians believe that animals are to be respected and treated humanely and protected from needless cruelty and harm. I believe the changes outlined in this resolution, if enacted by the federal government, will go a long way to achieving this.

The Criminal Code must be updated, simplified and consolidated. Currently, the code contains many inconsistencies and gaps. There is much unnecessary and confusing language throughout the code. These changes will make it easier to prosecute those accused of such crimes. It is intolerable that such an indignity should happen to animals. We and our pets deserve to live in a society free of violence and intimidation. We believe the changes this resolution urges will function as an effective deterrent to this reprehensible behaviour that threatens not only our pets but also the safety of each human being.

I ask the federal government to join us in saying that violence of any kind will not be tolerated.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My family and I live in a rural area and as such have a lot of involvement and contact with pets and with farm animals, though I'm now convinced that our dog believes she is a human and our cats believe they're God. But in our involvement it has become apparent to us that the cruelty that really is at the forefront is cruelty to pets. We used to live on a provincial highway, then we lived on a county road and now we live on a city street. We haven't moved, but the status of our road has changed. In fact, the municipality is just Velcroing the street signs on its trees now for us.

What I see that I have great trouble believing people can do is take and drop animals off in a rural area. They don't want a pet and they're not prepared to accept the responsibility of that pet. We have a cat that someone literally threw out of a car window without stopping and required a fair amount of veterinary care to fix. That's absolutely abhorrent. I cannot understand people being that uncaring towards animals.

Certainly I am encouraged and pleased to see some action taken. I would like to urge individuals in this

province, though, to get more involved if they are aware of a neighbour or an acquaintance or someone they know being cruel to animals. As we live in a more and more insular society there is a tendency to not get involved. I would urge people to get involved, because of the connection that has been referred to by several other members between cruelty to animals and cruelty to people.

I do find it a little disturbing to think at this very moment somewhere in Ontario there is in all likelihood cruelty happening to an animal, and an animal that's unable to respond. So while I certainly appreciate this initiative, I would urge the government to do all they can as fast as they can.

The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale referred to the previous bill, Bill 153, that died. I would urge that reconsideration be given to it. That is something substantive that could be done by this government, and done quickly. Every day that passes by produces pain for an animal in this province.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I am pleased to join the debate with respect to the resolution that's been brought forth by the member for Northumberland with respect to discouraging crimes against animals.

For too long now the federal Liberals have ignored any changes to their soft approach on crime, whether it involves animals or humans, for that matter. Maybe, as usual, it will take the efforts of this government to make the federal Liberals see the light with respect to crimes against animals, in the same way that we've made their finance minister say that tax cuts are a good thing.

This resolution to discourage crime against animals is crystal clear: Toughen the penalties so that if you choose to abuse animals, you will face serious consequences and not a slap on the wrist. Mind you, Liberals would rather soften penalties instead of toughening them.

In the discussion paper Crimes Against Animals, Department of Justice Canada, the Liberals talk about animals as being property or possessions. Tell that to the child who finds his best friend, Kitty, horribly mutilated and dead on the front lawn. Tell that to the senior who has her only companion in life, Fido, attacked and killed by unleashed pit bulls. I say the criminal law should protect animals from abuse, regardless of their status as property. We read in here about horrific incidents involving pets each and every day. It's obvious that the punishment doesn't fit the crime.

I hear from my constituents that something must be done about those who commit crimes against animals. When I tell them that the federal Liberals must strengthen the law, they are resigned to seeing absolutely nothing done. What a shame. What an outrage.

This resolution urges the federal Liberals to punish these offenders with up to a maximum of five years in prison, instead of six months, and sets fines much greater than \$2,000. It also asks that the Criminal Code be updated, simplified and consolidated with respect to animal cruelty.

There are too many statistics out there demonstrating that many of those who commit crimes against animals go on to commit crimes against humans. Then there are those who say, "They are only dumb animals. What's the big deal?" Tell that to the young child that loses Kitty. Tell that to the senior who's only companion in the world is killed or mutilated. If we can't take the time to protect those creatures that are totally dependant upon us for their survival and offer unconditional love in return, it's a sad statement indeed.

I urge all members of the House to support the resolution of the honourable member from Northumberland to demand that the federal Liberals make meaningful laws to discourage crimes against animals.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I also would like to offer my congratulations to the member from Northumberland.

I too agree that the abuse laws need to be amended. I think we need to look at and consider that pets are our friends. We look at the penalties. If I was to abuse another one of my fellow men the same way that somebody abuses an animal, the offence to me would be very serious and I would be severely penalized for that. Unfortunately, those same penalties don't apply to individuals who hurt and abuse animals.

Unfortunately, we read far too often in the newspapers about these offences taking place. I can relate to an incident just his past week within my own riding where, unfortunately, a barn was being used as a puppy mill. The London Humane Society went and visited that barn and recovered a number of small animals that had been abused. Unfortunately, in that case, they don't know who's responsible for it. If you saw those animals in the news clips, the abuse those animals had almost brought tears to your eyes. It's not right that somebody has the opportunity to do things like that.

I want to commend the efforts of the Ontario SPCA for what they have done in trying to help these defenseless animals. It's not included in this legislation and it's something that I hope we talk about in this House, but I think we've got to take it, at some point, a step further, and that concerns the aspect of owners of animals and the vicious dog attacks that are occurring around this province.

In the past month in my own riding, a gentleman was walking down the street—unprovoked, attacked by a dog. Then somebody went out to his defence and he was attacked. Eighty stitches that gentleman received. You know, if it was a child, that child probably wouldn't be with us today.

I commend the member for what he's doing, but I think we as the Legislature for this province need to take it beyond the abuse of the animals and put the onus on the owners of animals too and the fact of their harming other people. So you have my support, member, for this legislation, and again I commend you for your efforts in bringing this forward.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of this legislation.

1140

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I too rise in support of the resolution put forth by Dr Galt, the member for Northumberland, who is a veterinarian and has seen many terrible things himself as a result of his profession.

It has been mentioned in the House that the federal government had a discussion paper. Justice Minister Anne McClellan had a discussion paper, I believe, regarding cruelty to animals which came out in the fall of 1998. Hopefully as a result of that she will bring forward changes to the Criminal Code, which remains largely unchanged for over 100 years. My understanding is that most of the provisions in the resolution come from that very report. The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale mentioned a private member's bill put forward by Isabel Bassett. That bill I believe carried but it never reached with respect to provincial legislation. Although the resolution is directed towards the Criminal Code, there's much that needs to be done from all sides, provincially and federally.

Most of us have had a pet somewhere in our lifetime. Some rural areas, depending on the area, of course, may have more dogs and suburban areas may have more cats. I've got two dogs and a cat.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I bet the cat rules the house.

Mr Tilson: No. Actually, my dog, a Labrador retriever, rules the house. His name is Crosbie, named after John Crosbie, and that dog does rule the house. I say that because these animals become part of our family; they become very close to us.

We on all sides of this place are shocked when we hear terrible stories in the media, and they seem to come out on a regular basis, such as the one that's coming out now, this strange person who seems to be mutilating cats, in which there's a \$60,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of that person. I don't think the provisions in the Criminal Code, if that person is apprehended and charged, will adequately deal with such terrible offences.

My riding, which includes the town of Caledon, the county of Dufferin, parts of the county of Wellington and parts of the county of Grey, is typical of many terrible stories that have come out in the last number of years about puppy farms, or puppy mills, I guess they're called, where animals are found in terrible conditions. Those people should be charged very seriously, and the laws that we have provincially and federally are inadequate to deal with the people who are committing those offences.

There are people, particularly in the city, who get pets and they can't look after them any more for whatever reason. They bring them out to the country, to areas like my riding, and they just dump them on the country roads, particularly dogs. They perish, or they join packs of dogs which in turn attack farm animals, sheep and cattle. Those people too, if they are caught, should be apprehended, because that's a terrible offence as well.

I've only got time to talk about one offence which occurred in my riding. It was reported in all the media across the country and has to do with an Irish setter by the name of Holly, outside of Shelburne, in 1996. She was a three-year-old Irish setter and she was dragged behind a car at 30 to 40 kilometres per hour. There was a witness who saw this happen. The dog suffered a broken paw, head injuries, friction burns, long scrapes and deep cuts with bone showing through. It's a terrible story, and I'm sure members can tell similar stories. The owner pled guilty and said she was simply trying to train the dog; she was trying to stop the dog from running out and barking and doing other sorts of things, and she simply dragged the dog. I read the police report, and the witness witnessed the dog flopping on the ground from side to side as this car was pulling the dog, perhaps to its demise. But it did survive and was ultimately returned to the former owner. The lady pled guilty and she is prohibited from owning an animal for two years, which is the maximum sentence. The member from Niagara Centre talked about that, and I agree with his comments.

I encourage all members of the House to support this resolution.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): My congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on your election as Deputy Chair.

I rise to compliment the member from Northumberland on his resolution, not as much the resolution, but the content and what it aims to accomplish. This is the type of legislation that I think both sides of the House favour and would like to see move forward very expeditiously.

I would perhaps, in making my comments in this brief time, like to tell the member to look in the provincial jurisdiction area on what can be done to do something quickly without waiting, if you will, for approval from other levels of government. I wouldn't be surprised if somewhere within the provincial jurisdiction we have enough room and power to move quickly on our own. I say that for the benefit of the member who has introduced the legislation and for the public at large. I think it is important to send a strong message that we as a society don't tolerate crimes against or cruelty to animals. We may attach ourselves to the resolution, and we may address more specifically to cats and dogs, family or personal pets.

Someone out there seeing the debate today may say, "Don't these guys have anything better to do or discuss?" Let me say that this is a very serious and very important issue, and I'm pleased to see that there is unanimous support in this House.

To many people—not only youngsters, our kids, but many senior individuals—a pet is not only a companion; in many cases it's the sole companion, the only companion they have, and that means an awful lot to some of those individuals.

This would be a deterrent to some people out there not to cause crime to pets, to animals. I'm not saying that an increase in fines or other penalties, other punishments like jail or what have you, somewhere along the line won't see some of our fellow man cause distress to an

animal, but at least a more severe penalty would be a deterrent in causing crime to animals.

If a particular person no longer wishes to have a pet, there are many ways of disposing of that particular animal in a very humane way. There are other people who may want it. There is the humane society that usually offers wonderful help for people like that. So there is no need to cause harm to an animal because it's no longer appreciated or wanted.

1150

Having municipal experience, if you will, we had a lot of problems with stray cats. There is a lot of help that municipalities offer with respect to animals people no longer want, animals that are abandoned and stuff like that. I would say—and this is the message we have to send to the public—that there is no need to dispose of an animal in a very undignified way or cause harm to an animal. There are agencies, there are institutions, there are many ways of disposing of that pet. Perhaps there are other people who would love to have such a pet and take care of it.

I would like to add a few more things, but I can see we're drawing to a close. Especially at a time when we're dealing with an issue that meets favour from both sides of the House, I would like to add that this is one of those resolutions I'd like to see moving forward.

In concluding my remarks, I hope the members can look deep into the existing legislation we have in our own jurisdictions and see what can be done to accomplish most, if not all, of the intent of the resolution here. Again, I would like to compliment the member for bringing this to the House and hope to see it move forward expeditiously.

Mr Bisson: I want to add my support to this bill. I want to say, first of all, to the member for Northumberland, we know well that the member, prior to coming to this House and serving now in his second term, was in the profession of being a veterinarian, as I understand it, and understands this issue from the perspective not only of a legislator but also, unfortunately, from some of the experiences he might have had when he was in veterinary practice. I commend the member for bringing this bill forward.

I want to say a couple of things on the bill. First of all, I somewhat fear that we put ourselves in a position where possibly an offence like cruelty to animals may be dealt with more severely under the law than, in some cases, cruelty to humans. I'm sure that's not what you intend, and I don't mean to inflame the debate.

I hear what you're trying to do by way of the bill, but I want to put on the record that we've got a long way to go when it comes to dealing with the issues of crime, proper punishment and proper programs for dealing with a person who is convicted. The other thing, quite frankly, is that we also need to deal with how many police we have on the street. That's one of the issues I want to talk about another day.

I want to say, in a bit of a lighter moment, that I listened to the member across the way, Mr Tilson—I

forget the riding—who mentioned he has a couple of dogs. He has one named John Crosbie, which I thought was very interesting. I take it that it had something to do with the leadership convention at the time. But anyway, I want to say I've got a dog and a cat, like most people. We have Casey the dog, who has been around the house now for about 12 years. Up until a couple of years ago, Casey ran the place.

Remember Al Leach had Tory the dog? Al tried to get his dog Tory to obedience school, and the dog would never listen. He had a heck of a time trying to train that dog. I remember I used to kid him about that, because we went through the same thing with our dog. We never were rich enough to bring our dog to obedience school; we tried to reason with the thing. Imagine trying to reason with this dog, a little poodle-terrier who has decided she's going to run the house. Along came Simba the cat. We brought Simba in four years ago, when my daughter first went off to college. As most parents, we ended up with the cat when she came back for the summer. The daughter went back to college, but unfortunately the cat stayed at home.

The funny part is that this cat, Simba the cat, thinks she's a dog. She spends her day terrorizing my dog. She literally will stand behind corners and wait for the dog to come by. When she figures the dog is not paying any attention, she pounces out and gives that poor old dog a heart attack. Member, we need some legislation to deal with this.

My poor dog is being traumatized by my cat. I've tried reasoning with the cat and the dog, both of whom don't understand what the heck I'm talking about. They just look back at me and say: "What is it that you want? I'm a cat. I'm doing cat things." My dog says, "I'm a dog, and I'm doing dog things." I've quit reasoning. So, I'm wondering if there's some way we can incorporate into your bill, once we bring it to committee, how we can stop the terrorizing of dogs on the part of cats in homes such as mine, because my poor old dog is just having a heck of a time with this. She's not as swift, as fast as she used to be, she doesn't see as well, she doesn't hear as well, so she doesn't know that Simba is hiding out to get her. I tell you, we've got to deal with that issue because, like my good friend Al Leach, who was a member in the previous Parliament, we love our dog deeply and we love our cat deeply, they're part of our family, but we need to find a way to get these dogs and cats to get along. If you can put that into your legislation, I think you might have something there.

That was just a lighter moment. I've had an opportunity to speak about my daughters, my wife, my parents, but I've never had a chance to talk about my dog or cat. You gave me the opportunity, and for that, I look forward to it. I'll be clipping this Hansard out and giving it both to Casey and Simba and making sure they know that if Simba doesn't straighten out, I'm going to come back with some legislation to make it illegal for her to scare that poor old dog Casey, who doesn't have a lot of years left.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? If not, the member for Northumberland in response.

Mr Galt: Thanks to all of the speakers here this morning supporting this particular resolution. I'm certainly very grateful to each and every one of you.

In the member's gallery is Dr Isabel Hetram, who sat on the animal welfare committee of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and also represents the College of Veterinarians of Ontario. Thank you very much for being with us this morning.

We also have representatives from the Northumberland Humane Society: Joan Curry, the manager; and also a member of the board of directors, Ms Lori Beatty. Unfortunately, I don't see them here at this point, but I appreciate the fact that they intended to be present.

I was interested in the comments of the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, and I empathize with both of the points he was making. Unfortunately, and maybe as a new member, some of these private members' bills, it's a real tough time getting them through. It did get to hearings, it did not get back to the House and it sort of died on the order paper. That's one of the reasons I used a resolution rather than a bill. Also your comment about the Solicitor General, I'm holding his feet to the fire as well, not just the justice minister, Anne McClellan. You're right on. I've certainly had many chats with him, and he's empathetic to the cause, no question there.

The member for Niagara Centre was linking the abuse of animals—and wondering if it really was documented—to spousal abuse, child abuse and so on, and there's no question the member for North York underlined that and did confirm it.

In winding up, I hope this resolution will do one of two things—will do both of them, actually; one is to encourage the federal government to get on with these new penalties, and second, bring more awareness to the public that cruelty to animals is not acceptable in our society.

POLICE RECORDS CHECKS
BY NON-PROFIT AGENCIES ACT, 1999
LOI DE 1999 SUR LES VÉRIFICATIONS
DES DOSSIERS DE POLICE
PAR LES AGENCES SANS BUT LUCRATIF

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Kormos has moved second reading of Bill 9, An Act respecting the cost of checking the police records of individuals who may work for certain non-profit service agencies. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I move that the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice.

The Acting Speaker: Shall this bill be referred to the standing committee on justice? Agreed.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Galt has moved private member's resolution number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair, and the House will resume at 1:30 pm.

The House recessed from 1200 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Yesterday in this House, government members rose one by one to assure the people of Ontario that there wasn't a housing crisis in our province. I'd like to take this opportunity to draw to the attention of this House the results of two significant studies released this week.

Just today, a former mayor, a former provincial housing minister and a former federal housing minister came to this place to present further evidence which clearly shows there is a real housing crisis in Ontario. Where's Home, Part II, had some startling revelations.

Government members need to know that over 25% of Ontario's tenants are paying half of their income on rent, putting people at serious risk of becoming homeless; many municipalities have serious rental housing shortages, with declining vacancy rates; rents are increasing faster than the rate of inflation; and in 1997 and 1998, only 2% of all housing starts in Ontario were for rental housing. So much for the supposed rental housing boom forecast by former minister Al Leach.

On Tuesday, a study of the eviction prevention program was released. It showed that tenants were not aware when they were being evicted, and that the process was confusing and clearly geared to favour landlords.

The results of these reports are clear: The gutting of real rent controls and the total absence of affordable housing starts has led to unacceptable conditions for tenants in Ontario. The hearing process has failed tenants and diminished in real terms their access to fundamental justice. This week's reports are a wake-up call for action from the Harris government.

DIWALI

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): November 7 marks the beginning of Diwali for the members of the East Indian community, both in my riding as well as across Ontario. In preparation for Diwali, prayers are offered to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, and to the Lord Ganesh. Sweets are prepared and shared among family and friends. Diwali, or the festival of lights as it is popularly known, is symbolized by the lighting of innumerable lamps or deeyas in and around

every home. Diwali also commemorates the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the Hindu New Year. For East Indians of every origin, Diwali holds special meaning and symbolism. For Hindus, Diwali is a time to celebrate the victory of good over evil, as embodied in the return of Lord Rama to his kingdom of Ayodhya after 14 years in exile. Among Sikhs, Diwali signifies the return Guru Hargobind Ji to the city of Amritsar after his release from captivity by the Mughal emperor, Jahangir. At the time of his release and in the true spirit of brotherhood, Hargobind Ji played a key role in the release of 52 Hindu kings from captivity.

Diwali is a major festival in many nations around the world such as Guyana, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, and Malaysia.

On this most auspicious day, to all members of the South Asian community across Ontario and especially in my own riding, I wish and pray that we all are blessed with harmony, love and positive thoughts.

Happy Diwali to all.

Namaste and Sat Sri Akal.

YOUNG ONTARIANS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I rise today to express my disappointment in this government at the cavalier way they regard the youth of today. I have met with young people in my community and across the province who are facing the burdens of affordable housing, high tuition fees and welfare cutbacks.

The youth of today are not the societal problem that this Conservative government paints them all to be. Instead, I find young people who are prepared to study and work hard to build a future for themselves. Yet many find this government unresponsive. The tax cuts for the wealthiest have not trickled down to them. Many face bankruptcy or severe debt at the conclusion of their studies. They are worried that there will be no space for them when they are about to enter university, or will there be jobs when all this policy they have implemented takes effect? That's what grade 8s and grade 9s told me in school.

As well, this government has cut programs for youth. This government has ignored community and non-profit organizations. It is often remarked by Conservative members that their work is important in building a good community and is a task that can only be undertaken by these organizations. In contrast, this Conservative government has denied these organizations the resources required for them to operate and to help youth.

Instead of sending these kids off to boot camp, as they would like to, this government should be assisting our youth and their parents with policies that do not work contrary to the interests of the family and young people.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It is my great privilege and honour to rise today in recognition of the

numbers of people, Canadian men and women, who have given their lives over the years in many of the wars that were fought in the name of freedom, those who have stood up before us and were counted so that we might enjoy some of the opportunities that today we so often take for granted.

Next week, on November 11, we will all participate as much as we can in more formal celebrations and presentations in community centres and arenas across the province, and I certainly will be there to participate in that. However, the fear is being raised by the Royal Canadian Legion, who also need to be recognized, that with the dwindling numbers of veterans in our communities these days, perhaps this need to remember may be forgotten. They have asked that all of us participate in the way we can in our workplaces, in our schools, in our communities, wherever we find ourselves on November 11 at 11 o'clock in the morning, in a two-minute wave of silence.

I don't think it's too much to ask that all of us talk with our families, our co-workers and with people we might be in company with on that day, and remind them at 11 o'clock that across this country, from sea to sea to sea, people will be stopping to give recognition to those who have given of their lives in these wars in this way.

ORANGEVILLE AND DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I rise today to congratulate the Orangeville and District Chamber of Commerce on the celebration of its 90th anniversary. Formed in 1909, it was originally known as the Orangeville Board of Trade. This organization continues to be a valuable asset to our community.

On October 26, 1964, the Orangeville Board of Trade became officially incorporated as the Orangeville and District Chamber of Commerce. Ten years later, in 1974, it held its first trade show, known today as Expo Orangeville. I have had the opportunity to attend Expo Orangeville for many of these years, and I am always impressed by the calibre of businesses our area has to offer.

Orangeville and the surrounding area has always been recognized as having a strong agricultural community and, in honour of this, the chamber of commerce created the Farmer of the Year award in 1980. They also started the farmers' market in downtown Orangeville, which is still active today.

In honour of local business men and women, the chamber created a Business of the Year award to honour businesses in the area that have enriched our community.

This organization continues to grow rapidly each year. As younger families move into the area to start up businesses, the chamber of commerce provides valuable contacts and tourism information to these new business owners.

Although the Orangeville and District Chamber of Commerce began 90 years ago, the members still have

the same shared vision, which is to improve all aspects of life in the community and to make the town of Orangeville a prosperous place for businesses and for all its citizens.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): My statement is addressed to the Minister of Labour. Last night Ontario construction workers were celebrating, but today I told them to put their champagne away.

Minister, I have told you before: Make sure you have everything in writing from Quebec before you make a statement.

I have here a copy of an article from *Le Droit*, as well as a press release from the Quebec labour minister, stating that your press release of yesterday is just a bunch of lies and that the Quebec minister must tell the real truth.

The Quebec minister also says that nothing has happened in the last few days and that their position has not changed. They will only open up the Hull casino if a global agreement is reached on labour mobility, and under no condition is Quebec ready to open their sites to Ontario contractors at this time.

They seem very surprised by your statement, which states that Quebec agrees to Ontario's demands. Maybe, Minister, you should take me along to these meetings just to translate for you.

We are clearly getting two messages here. Which message should we believe? Which Minister of Labour should I believe? Stop getting the hopes of the workers up with your big statements. Give them the truth: Do you have an agreement in place?

1340

OPP AUXILIARY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): As mentioned earlier this week, this is Crime Prevention Week.

On Friday, October 29, I attend the graduation ceremony of 52 new recruits joining the Ontario Provincial Police auxiliary. These officers are men and women from all walks of life who live in our province. I witnessed the swearing in of people from the business world, educators, nurses, spouses of police officers, and citizens who work for our civil service. Even newlyweds from the previous weekend were able to attend the auxiliary training.

These new recruits bring to a total of approximately 900 the men and women who are now members of the OPP auxiliary. These men and women are volunteers who are committed to their communities, communities where they expect to raise their families in a safe environment. They work with regular officers on a day-to-day basis, often putting themselves in life-threatening situations. In 1999, these men and women contributed over 174,000 hours of volunteer time to the OPP, representing the equivalent of approximately 120 people.

The OPP auxiliary is the largest auxiliary force in Canada, and the success of the auxiliary is a result of an excellent relationship with the Ontario Provincial Police Association and the office of the Solicitor General.

As we enter a new millennium, it is encouraging to see the level of volunteerism and community spirit that is alive in our police services. The year 2000 represents the 40th anniversary of the OPP auxiliary. I would ask the members of this assembly to acknowledge the dedication of this remarkable group of individuals for their contributions to their communities and to the province of Ontario.

GALLAHER THOROLD PAPER MILL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Employees of Gallaher Paper in Thorold are now in the third week of their occupation of the plant in an effort to persuade the receiver that a buyer who wishes to continue to operate the mill should be found.

These are not radical, irresponsible individuals seeking excitement and fame. They are, rather, people whose very livelihood is threatened by the closure of a mill which has provided good jobs for thousands of workers over the years and for hundreds who today hope and pray that a new operator can be found to keep those jobs alive.

They were encouraged by the intervention of the Premier, who contacted the receiver and the Toronto-Dominion Bank, the primary creditor, to express the hope that a way could be found to keep the mill in operation.

The jobs in that plant are of great importance to the employees themselves and their families. They are also important to the entire Niagara region, which benefits immensely from the economic spinoffs of the plant, with workers spending their paycheques in the community, and the mill purchasing goods and services in our part of the province.

I urge the government to work with financial institutions, employees, union representatives and a potential management team to resume operations at the Gallaher Thorold paper mill and save the jobs so precious to those many who have toiled for so many years.

DIWALI

Mr Bob Wood (London West): As members know, 800 million Hindus across Ontario and the world will be celebrating the festival of Diwali on November 7 this year. The public celebration in London will be held on November 13.

Diwali, or Deepawali, the most pan-Indian of all Hindu festivals, is a festival of lights symbolizing the victory of righteousness and the lifting of spiritual darkness. It commemorates Lord Rama's return to his kingdom, Ayodhya, after completing his 14-year exile. Twinkling oil lamps, or *deeyas*, light up every Hindu home in India, and fireworks displays take place across the country. The goddess Lakshmi, symbol of wealth and prosperity, is also worshipped on this occasion.

The festival marks the start of the Hindu new year. At this time, most Hindu homes worship Lord Ganesha, the symbol of auspiciousness and wisdom. Spring cleaning and decorative designs for homes are the order of the day. Family members come together to offer prayers, distribute sweets and light up their homes.

I know that all members of this House will join with me in wishing Hindus across Ontario and the world a happy new year and a warm "Namaste."

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Pursuant to standing order 60(a), I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates, on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Mr Curling from the standing committee on estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 59, your committee has selected the estimates 1999-2000 of the following ministries and offices for consideration: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 5 hours; Ministry of Education and Training, 10 hours—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Dispense? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 60(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

See Votes and Proceedings.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Mr Runciman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to reduce red tape, to promote good government through better management of Ministries and agencies and to improve customer service by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting four new Acts / Projet de loi 11, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives, à promouvoir un bon gouvernement par une meilleure gestion des ministères et organismes et à améliorer le service à la clientèle en modifiant ou abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant quatre nouvelles lois.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister for a short explanation.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Mr Speaker, I'll be making a minister's statement.

OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PRÉSERVATION DE LA MORAINÉ D'OAK RIDGES

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to protect and preserve the Oak Ridges Moraine for future generations by creating the Oak Ridges Moraine Commission / Projet de loi 12, Loi visant à protéger et à préserver la moraine d'Oak Ridges pour les générations à venir en constituant la Commission de la moraine d'Oak Ridges.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): The bill requires the minister to establish an area of land as the Oak Ridges moraine planning area. The bill creates the Oak Ridges Moraine Commission, which must prepare the Oak Ridges moraine plan after a specified consultation.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent of the Legislature to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 4 and 5.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): The Mike Harris government was elected and re-elected with a mandate to cut red tape, and we've done just that. We've listened to in-

dustry's concerns and we've responded with the passage of two red tape bills, cutting more than 1,300 regulations.

Earlier I tabled the Red Tape Reduction Act, 1999, our government's third consolidated red tape bill. This bill continues the government's fight against unnecessary rules and regulations that put a burden on business and get in the way of providing better service to the public. As members will recall, the recent speech from the throne reminded us that while much has been accomplished in removing job-killing red tape, much work remains to be done.

This bill represents the latest proposals to cut red tape in more than a dozen ministries and at Management Board Secretariat. If passed, it would make more than 200 changes to more than 90 acts. This bill includes changes designed to improve customer service and streamline government operations for greater efficiency.

The goal of red tape reduction bills is: to streamline administration so business can spend less time jumping through administrative hoops and can instead concentrate on what they do best, fuelling the economy and creating jobs; to smooth the way for business to get started, create jobs and carry on business in Ontario; to make it easier, faster and less expensive for both business and the public when dealing with government; to encourage investment in Ontario by breaking down barriers to conducting and managing business; to simplify processes to reduce overlap with other legislation and improve overall efficiency and customer service; and, finally, to harmonize and modernize legislation among ministries.

This is a very important bill. I urge all members to give it their support.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Every time one of these so-called red tape reduction bills comes up, we always get a huge pile of blue books. If you're cutting regulation, how come it has to be accompanied by these mountains and mountains of blue books? This happened the last time too. I really think that in many cases, as they say they're cutting tape, they're creating all kinds of new, complex regulations.

I warn the public out there to try and follow what these changes are because some of them are quite subtle and may affect the way they do business or the way they conduct their lives as Ontario citizens. It's very difficult for an ordinary citizen to have time to find out what's in this mess of books. I wonder how the minister is going to communicate what's in this mess of books to ordinary Ontarians. They never did the last time. They do it with special interest groups, but that's not enough. You have to do it with ordinary Ontarians and let them know how their lives are going to change.

I surely hope that while they're cutting red tape they might take a look at how the ordinary citizen gets in touch with their government. Every time you phone up a ministry, you're lost in voice mail hell. You can't get a real person any more. You go around pushing buttons and you're just shunted around from pillar to post and you lose a half-hour. Seniors especially complain about

the inability to get in touch with their government and they can't overcome the obstacle of that voice mail hell which this government said last time they were going to do something about. They haven't. Let's get real people to talk to real Ontarians about their problems. That might reduce a lot of the red tape and confusion.

The other thing, in terms of a government that claims to be paving the way for business and getting business done, is that this is a government that has introduced the most complicated property tax system in the whole world. You talk to a small retailer anywhere in this province about their tax bill. In fact, many people in many municipalities across this province won't get their tax bill till Christmas Eve because the bill is so complicated, so convoluted. Confusion exists between landlords and renters in businesses. There's mass confusion out there because of the changes they made without proper consultation.

These are the things that small business people, not the organized big business organizations, complain about. They say, "We have this property tax system which basically means I'm going to have to sell my building or I'm going to have to get out of the retail business." If you go to small towns across Ontario, if you go to Colborne Street in Brantford, if you go to downtown Toronto, you'll see small retailers closed up because they can't afford to pay the property taxes. You'll see properties that should be selling for \$500,000 or \$600,000 on the market for \$200,000 in Toronto because they can't pay \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year for property taxes imposed by this government. That's what they should be cutting, not giving us all kinds of new complex regulations. They should be doing something to make the property tax system workable and understandable and transparent.

Right now you have a tax system imposed on small business in Ontario that is basically dysfunctional. There's hardly anyone in this province who understands how the property tax system works. In order to understand the property tax system, you have to hire a Bay Street lawyer or a Bay Street lobbyist.

That's what I hoped the minister would concentrate on this term. Sure, this is fine and harmonizing some of the red tape has to be done, but the number one thing I hear from small business is that something has got to be done about that horrible property tax mess. It may be OK on Bay Street, but on Main Street in Ontario, your property tax system is a disgrace that punishes small businesses that own small mom-and-pop stores. Start thinking about them for a change. Forget about the big box stores like Canadian Tire and Home Depot; they're doing fine. Think about the little flower shop in your town, the little shoe store, the little barber shop, the little grocery store. They need your help more than the big box stores.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Certainly the minister was right in his comments that this is more of this government's agenda. Nobody should be fooled out there at just what this government's agenda is about. It's about looking after their corporate friends, the very

powerful and the privileged in this province to the detriment of the rest of us.

Anything that they do, anything that they've done over the last four or five years has been about diminishing government, diminishing the opportunity of private citizens to participate and taking away some of those very important rules and regulations that we all participated in putting in place to make sure that our rights are protected and that our workplaces are safe.

For example, if they would spend the same amount of time and energy on some of the really important things in this province that we've been pointing out over the last few weeks that they have on this massive document on red tape, we might be getting somewhere. If they would spend the kind of time reducing the red tape that we see in the Family Responsibility Office or the Ontarians with disabilities office, for example, that we who come from northern Ontario, see every day in our constituencies as we try to get the resources for our people as they apply for northern health travel grants and the time that that takes, if they would spend the kind of time reducing the red tape in those offices, they might get a different response from this side of the House. We might be more co-operative.

The red tape bills that we have in front of us here today; however innocent in appearance, are part of this government's red tape strategy. This camouflages a tax on important rights under the cover of addressing bureaucratic tangles. The government's Red Tape Commission, made up of its most right-wing backbenchers, made a big splash with their report a couple of years ago. They proposed extending Ontario standard workweek to 50 hours. They want people to have to work longer before they get paid overtime. Is this what we mean by red tape?

For example, the recommendations of this government's Red Tape Commission to the Ministry of Environment and Energy included replacing regulations on waste reduction and recycling for industrial, commercial and institutional establishments with voluntary guidelines, relaxing regulations on the storage and disposal of PCBs, scrapping the regulation on refillable containers for soft drinks. This means soft drink producers will no longer be under a requirement to sell a percentage of their products in refillable containers, narrowing corporate liability for cleanup of contaminated property, reducing requirements for posting notices on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry and eliminating service-area restrictions on landfills, allowing solid waste to be shipped from anywhere to a particular landfill. Is this what we mean by red tape? That's red tape as defined by the government's most right-wing backbenchers.

1400

What this government calls red tape is often in fact vital protection of workers, consumers and citizens. The Red Tape Commission process which led to this bill also produced recommendations for longer workweeks and reduced protections for the environment. Repealing the act establishing the P and P committee of cabinet, for

example, simply makes it easier—and the member for St Catharines will be interested in this—for the whiz kids in the Premier's office to tighten their grip on everything that this government does. We've been talking about this for four years. This red tape bill today actually casts that in stone. The government's handling of the first two batches of red tape legislation was a ludicrous display of incompetence eating up valuable House time on minor legislation that ultimately died on the order paper. Are we starting that again?

I remember over the last four years this government, pushing the hot buttons that they have a habit of doing and trying to make political mileage on, bringing forward batches of red tape similar to the pile that's on my desk here today and at the end of the day really not doing anything except making political mileage on that.

As I said a few minutes ago, if this government spent as much time trying to clear the way for ordinary citizens to participate in government to get what they deserve, to be able to get the health care and the education and the social services they need, they might get a different response from this side of the House. If they spent the energy that they have spent on trying to help their corporate friends and powerful allies in terms of, for example, some of the activity where the Ministry of the Environment is concerned, they might get a different response from this side of the House.

We wait to see just exactly what's in here. I suggest it won't be too exciting for most Ontarians.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I would seek unanimous consent of this House to have one member from each party stand to speak on our Remembrance Day, which is coming next week.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I have the honour of saying a few words in anticipation of Remembrance Day.

I'd like to recount a little story in that regard. On Tuesday morning I was driving in to work and noticed a lone figure at a bus stop. It was a war veteran dressed in his Legion uniform, his chest bedecked with an array of medals. Despite his obvious age, the man had the unmistakable upright bearing of a military background.

It was raining on Tuesday morning and I noticed he wore no overcoat, so I pulled over and asked where he was going. "To the subway," was his reply. In the car, the man told me he was 80 years of age, that he had fought in France and had been captured by the Germans. As I looked at his wrinkled, time-worn face, I was wondering what atrocities he had witnessed some 60 years ago. I wondered how many of his fellow soldiers never returned from the war to enjoy the fruits of their hard-won battles.

The words from In Flanders Fields kept popping into my mind. "We are the dead," the old poem goes:

To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.

Back in the present, he told me proudly that he had distributed three boxes of poppies. "It'll probably be my last year, though," he said. In an instant I felt an affinity for this man I'd never met before. I understood in a flash the depth of emotion that sent an 80-year-old man out on a cold rainy morning to distribute poppies.

What a debt of gratitude we owe that man and hundreds of thousands like him who sacrificed so that you and I can be free today. What a lesson we can learn from the service that he is still rendering and what an inspiration we can take out there in the rain, long after his duty to King and country has been fulfilled.

With those lessons reinforced that morning, my small random act of kindness paid off more for me than it did for him. It made me realize that by remembering our past we create a blueprint for our future. That is what the 11th hour on the 11th day in the 11th month is all about. That is what the Royal Canadian Legion is all about: service and remembrance and the avoidance of war.

My encounter reminded me that as the old guard fades away, the task falls to us:

If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

There are many veterans' clubs across Ontario, each doing its part to keep the spirit of remembrance alive. I would like to recognize them all today, but of course the Royal Canadian Legion is the most well known.

While we're on the topic, you may find it interesting to know just a few statistics of this community service club. For instance, with a membership in excess of 170,000, the Royal Canadian Legion is one of the largest service clubs in Ontario. It has an annual payroll of \$22 million, pays property tax of almost \$3 million and employs more than 2,200 full-time and part-time staff. Each year, more than \$4 million is raised through the poppy campaign.

The Royal Canadian Legion provides bursaries, scholarships and many services to seniors and veterans from the money it raises; in fact, it owns \$31 million in supportive housing units for ex-servicemen, seniors and their dependants.

What you may not know is that the Royal Canadian Legion also spends \$2.2 million on youth programs and supports numerous Girl Guide and Boy Scout activities and cadet programs.

I know that every member in this House supports a new program sponsored by the Royal Canadian Legion called the 2 Minute Wave of Silence.

On November 11, we will once again honour those who fought for the freedom that we all enjoy, but in particular we will recognize those who received permanent injuries and those who paid the supreme sacrifice, and their families. In their memory, let us take up the torch and carry on that wonderful tradition of service to country so ably displayed by the man I spoke of earlier.

Let's take up the pledge: We will remember them. We will remember them.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Each year at this time, partisan political differences are put aside as members of the Legislative Assembly pause together to remember those Canadians who made the supreme sacrifice, the sacrifice of their lives, in wars fought to defend freedom and democracy.

Over the years, there have been moving tributes paid to those whose memory we honour as a nation on November 11, tributes delivered with eloquence, passion and emotion by those who served in our armed forces in times of war.

Far better than we who did not experience military service on a personal basis, some members of the Legislative Assembly, themselves veterans of conflicts around the world, shared with us and with those who have access to the deliberations of this House the horrors of war and the immense sacrifice made by those who fought in defence of our way of life.

What is often forgotten as we march alongside veterans of the wars is that so many of these men and women were very young when they entered the service of their country in the war effort overseas and that far too many did not return home to their loved ones or have the opportunity to live lives filled with all of the experiences that are available to those of us who are beneficiaries of their sacrifice.

1410

One of the most moving moments at the cenotaphs across our country is the laying of the wreath by the Silver Cross Mother, who has seen her loved one or loved ones depart for wars in foreign lands and not return.

One wonders what memories pass through their minds as they move, often haltingly and almost always with assistance, towards the war memorial in their community to lay this wreath which carries so much significance.

War is all too often glorified and mischaracterized in popular movies. The depiction of events bears little resemblance to the realities of the battlefield, for in reality our veterans will tell us the days were grim, the conflict so very hard and the damage inflicted both on the body and mind often irreparable.

While it is the dead we honour in Remembrance Day services, our thoughts are also with those who returned from action, sometimes scarred both physically and psychologically by the ravages of war.

The tears that appear in the eyes of veterans whose memories recall all too vividly the loss of friends, the destruction of homes and the ugly wounds of conflict, are understood by all of us.

As the lines of marching veterans thin from age, infirmity and death, we who remain must assume a special obligation to remember. In his poem *In Flanders Fields*, John McCrae refers to the passing of the torch to those who succeed our fallen comrades, and most assuredly we must all, young and old, take up the challenge of those who made the supreme sacrifice on our behalf.

While the focus on remembrance and reflection is as it should be on November 11, it is essential that we who enjoy the benefits of democracy for which our veterans fought and died honour them throughout the year. The Royal Canadian Legion and other veterans' organizations across our land need our support more than ever to maintain their efforts to preserve Remembrance Day as an occasion for all Canadians to remember the sacrifices made in the World War I, World War II, the Korean War and other conflicts in which our armed forces have been involved.

They need our support as well to ensure that our veterans are treated with dignity, respect, generosity and compassion in their senior years, as battle scars on the body and mind begin to take their toll on their lives.

It is said that in communities in the Netherlands, France and other countries, where Canadians liberated people from their oppressors, to this very day the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who had the yoke of occupation lifted by our Canadian forces remember and pay tribute to our fellow Canadians for the sacrifice made so very long ago.

When we see members of the Royal Canadian Legion, when we see those who served so that we might enjoy the democratic freedoms that are ours today, when we see these individuals often shivering in the cold winds of November, poppy box in hand, let us stop to say thank you and let us join in two minutes of silent remembrance on November 11. Those who are no longer with us and those who returned from war should expect no less from all of us.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I watch as the flag is lowered to half-mast. I listen to the mournful lament of the lone bugler. My eyes drift along the lines—not as straight as they used to be—of uniformed veterans—not as many as there used to be. Their backs are slightly stooped now. Their faces wear lines of history and knowledge, lines of wisdom. Their eyes reflect memories of horrors lived, comrades lost and a love of country and each other that kept them going when naught else could. I bow my head in prayer and, along with others, recite our pledge: "We will remember them. We will remember them."

It is a ceremony of remembrance but many of us have no memories of our own. We can't really imagine what the shadow flickering across the eyes of the veteran tail gunner, as he listens to taps and reveille, really means. We can't know what they remember or what they feel. All we can do is thank them, and this year, as we approach the millennium, pay tribute and honour to a century of valour.

During the 20th century, Canada's military forces, merchant navy, police forces and other paramilitary and civilian-based organizations have been embroiled in five wars and numerous peacekeeping missions. More than 1.7 million Canadians fought in the major wars alone. Many of them perished; others were disabled for life. All endured tremendous suffering and hardship. With the passage of time, will Canadians forget their courage and

sacrifices? What can we do to ensure that the memory of these Canadian heroes lives on?

The armistice ending the First World War was signed at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in the year 1918. Soon after, Canadians began to observe the anniversary with two minutes of silence. Although it became a tradition that lasted for many years, the custom has all but disappeared today. But now, as we come to the end of a century of war, efforts are being made to revive it.

In 1999, the Royal Canadian Legion and Veterans Affairs Canada will launch a two-minute wave of silence across the country. As the clock strikes 11 am, local time, on the 11th of November, Canadians will pause for two minutes in silent tribute to Canada's fallen heroes. Cars and buses will come to a halt, workers will lay down tools, students will stand by their desks, stock exchanges will fall silent and broadcasters will cease speaking for two minutes.

Canada is a vast country. There are six time zones. So, starting in Newfoundland, the wave of silence will roll across each time zone, gaining momentum as Canadians pause to remember. With the participation of Canadian military forces and personnel stationed abroad, the wave will be extended and continued around the world.

During the 20th century, hundreds of thousands of young Canadians died while defending our freedom. As the minutes of this century run out, we are encouraged to take two of them on November 11, 1999, to thank those Canadians and pay silent tribute to their memory.

As we leave this century, we continue to strive for a future without war, a world at peace, an end to injustice and inequality, a sharing of prosperity and democracy with all the peoples of the world. We look to a future where the existence of violence itself is our foe.

So, for me, as we pay tribute, it's most appropriate to remember the words of Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae:

Take up our quarrel with the foe:

To you from failing hands we throw
the torch; be yours to hold it high.

The Speaker: I thank all the members for their comments and ask that the members and guests rise to observe a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Mr Speaker, pursuant to standing order 21, I rise today on a point of privilege, and I filed this information with you earlier. It flows well from the act of remembrance we have just finished.

As you are aware, each year the government of Ontario sponsors the investiture of the Ontario Medal for Police Bravery and the Ontario Medal for Firefighters Bravery. Both of these awards are highly prestigious, and

the recipients deserve both our thanks and support for their exceptional service to our communities.

This year, one of my own constituents is being honoured. He is Provincial Constable David E. Drake, from my riding. He is receiving this award because of his selfless act of bravery when he was the first officer at the scene of a truck explosion in Walden last year. He risked his own life to ensure the safety of the truck driver.

As the MPP for Nickel Belt, I was looking forward to attending the ceremony to acknowledge Constable Drake's service. But I will not be able to attend for two reasons. Firstly, this government waited until Tuesday of this week, one week before this important event, to make members aware of the ceremony and invite them to attend. For an event that is this important, I think that is highly inappropriate. Secondly, the ceremony is next Wednesday evening, November 10, in the middle of constituency week, when most members will be in their ridings to commemorate Remembrance Day.

1420

The government knows full well that the fall constituency week always coincides with Remembrance Day, and this government knows full well that it is virtually impossible for the two northern opposition members who have been invited to attend this prestigious event on Wednesday night to make it home to their ridings for Thursday morning for Remembrance Day services. I think the timing of this event was deliberate, and I regret that it excludes my participation in this event.

Mr Speaker, I know there is probably nothing you can do to change the timing of this event next week, but I do believe that in the future you can help ensure that a breach of a member's privilege like this one will not occur. This year's investiture is being held in the legislative precinct, a building under your jurisdiction. When the government proposes to use the precinct to host special occasions, I would ask you to use your discretion to guarantee the maximum opportunity for members to participate. The government should not be allowed to play politics with the scheduling of important events in the precinct to act as a barrier for members' participation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for filing that with me, but she will know that is not a point of privilege.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday we demonstrated in this House why you went to bat for developers on the Oak Ridges moraine in connection with a matter that was already before the Ontario Municipal Board. Yesterday we brought to the public's attention the fact that the Cortellucci and Montemarano group of companies, which have an interest in

the development of the Oak Ridges moraine, gave at least \$378,000 to your party. When we raised these issues yesterday you said, "This is the first I have heard of it." You then added, "I didn't even have knowledge of any of these contributions."

Minister, you now have had 24 hours to reflect on the statements you made yesterday. Do you still maintain today, here and now, that you didn't have knowledge of any of these contributions?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The honourable member knows, like everybody else in this House knows, that every contribution from an individual, a business or an organization is a matter of public record. I suppose they're available on the Internet these days. Certainly they are available at the Ontario Commission on Election Finances. These are all contributions accepted in accordance with the Ontario Election Finances Act. I suppose I know now, since I was at a fundraiser last night, that there are many people from all walks of life in Ontario who are committed to the values and principles that this government represents. They know that Ontario is in boom times, and they are willing to put their money to our success, because our success means that Ontario has success.

Mr McGuinty: As you might expect, we've done some checking on this matter. What we found is a trail of cheques from the companies that lead to the minister's personal re-election campaign. Again I'm talking about companies that gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to your party, that have an ongoing, keen interest in development on the Oak Ridges moraine, companies for which you have gone to bat.

You told us yesterday that it's all news to you, that you don't know these people and you don't know about any such donations.

Interjection.

Mr McGuinty: If Janet will allow me to do so, I will quote from Hansard. You said, "It had no impact on my decision, because this is the first I've ever heard of it." You said, "I didn't even have knowledge of any of these contributions."

Isn't it true, Minister, that the Cortellucci and Montemarano group of companies contributed thousands to your own riding association and your own personal re-election campaign?

Hon Mr Clement: As the honourable member well knows, many members of this Legislature engage in fundraising activities. We leave that to people who are supporters of our party and our values and principles. I don't sit down every day to go over who has donated what and when to whom.

I can tell the honourable member that it is a matter of public record. I make no apology—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order.

Hon Mr Clement: I say to the honourable member, if he has any evidence of any wrongdoing by myself or any other member of this government, I encourage him,

indeed, I challenge him, to tender that evidence before this House, to say it outside of this House if he's so convinced he has the right answer, and to give it into the hands of the Integrity Commissioner. I suspect he does not have any evidence. These are craven and baseless allegations. If you have any proof, tender it.

Mr McGuinty: If the minister is not prepared to own up to the truth, then I will provide him with the facts. Here are the facts: The Cortellucci and Montemarano group of companies actually tried to give more to your riding association than they are permitted under Ontario law. They contributed \$8,840 to your riding association in 1998 alone. That was more than \$5,000 over the limit allowed by law. They gave so much to your campaign that your riding association was compelled under the law to return some of the money.

How can you tell us, Minister, that you have never, ever heard of these companies and their very generous donations when they tried to send you so much money that you had to send some of it back to them?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me get this straight. The honourable member—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I cannot hear the questions, and in some cases I cannot hear the answer. It makes it difficult when I need to hear the question to decide what is being said. I need to be able to hear both the question and the answer.

Hon Mr Clement: I just want to understand what the honourable member is saying here, for the benefit of this House. He is saying that I engage in fundraising activities and that my supporters do. He is saying that I've been successful in my fundraising activities. When it came about that there were additional monies that were raised, we sent them back to be in full compliance with the law. He is accusing me of being in full compliance with the law. I am guilty of being in full compliance with the law.

We know that the honourable member is under a lot of stress right now. He's busy stacking delegate meetings in his own party to salvage his own leadership bid.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Clement: I know the honourable member is quite distracted as he seeks to salvage his position in his own party, but I encourage the honourable member, if he has any evidence, if he has anything other than baseless allegations, to send it to the Integrity Commissioner, which he has not done since this matter was first raised in this House, and I'm sure we can all settle it together. Otherwise, he should put up or shut up.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: My second question is also for the same Minister of the Environment.

Let's review the record, because this guy is setting a record for the most flips and flops in a two-week period.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member take his seat. Stop the clock.

Leader of the official opposition.

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Mr McGuinty: First the minister tells us that his letter did not interfere with a case before the OMB, because it wasn't before the OMB; when we pointed out that it most certainly was, he changed his tune. Yesterday he said he couldn't recall speaking to anyone from a development company about the moraine. When we read his quote to the contrary in a newspaper, he changed his story saying that, well, in fact he did talk to a development lawyer, somebody by the name of Mr Diamond. When we pointed out that that was news to Mr Diamond, the minister changed his story yet again, scrambling into this Legislature at five minutes before 6 o'clock to correct the record and say, "No, no, it wasn't Mr Diamond, it was a Mr Duffy."

Minister, tell us quite simply, why is it that you can't get your story straight?

Hon Mr Clement: Now the honourable member is saying that in order to get the facts on the table and to correct a record based on an innocent mistake, somehow I'm in breach of some precept or some law or some regulation. I don't know what he's trying to say.

If the honourable member has some evidence of any wrongdoing, if he has any shred of evidence of any connection that is in some way untoward or in some way against the law or in some way against the values and principles that we hold dear, tender it. That is what his obligation is. This week is Waste Reduction Week. I suggest the honourable member put his money where his mouth is, or please do not waste the time of this Legislature on baseless allegations.

Mr McGuinty: In the latest Minister of the Environment's flip-flop, he tells us—I want to quote what he said yesterday, because it is unequivocal. When we raised the matter of \$378,000 in contributions, he said, "I didn't even have knowledge of any of these contributions." That's what he said.

I have before me a copy of the riding association's annual financial statement filed by this member's riding association. In this, it clearly states that he received thousands and thousands of dollars by way of contribution from the same said groups of companies. Now you tell me, Minister, why is it that yesterday you said you've never heard of these companies, you have no idea who they are, they didn't give you any contributions, and you knew nothing about the hundreds and thousands in contributions? Today I point out to you in this Legislature that here's a copy of your return. It says you received thousands of dollars, more than you're allowed to accept, so much that some had to be returned. Tell us what is the truth in this. Tell us exactly why it is that you signed a letter that dealt with a matter that was before the OMB, and admit, was it not the result of the fact—

The Speaker: Member, take your seat. Minister of the Environment.

Hon Mr Clement: The question that was relayed to me yesterday had to do with party contributions. The PC Ontario fund is in charge of that. I'm not in charge of that, nor is any other member of this Legislature, for that

matter. If the honourable member has difficulty understanding that, I'm sorry about that. But the fact of the matter is, all of this is a matter of public record. The reason the member has my records is because it's a matter of public record. We have nothing to hide. We know that we get thousands and thousands of Ontarians who donate to our political party because they agree with the values and principles that we represent: growth, prosperity, jobs, better education for our kids, better health care, tax cuts for everyone. That is what we represent, and—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Order, member for Windsor West.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, government whip. Stop the clock.

Minister of the Environment.

Hon Mr Clement: The fact of the matter is that all of this is a matter of public record. We are proud of the fact that we have thousands of Ontarians who are willing to work for us, to canvass for us, to be part of a team that wants a better Ontario for ourselves and our children and our grandchildren. We have nothing to be afraid of on that; in fact, we welcome businesses, individuals and organizations that want to be a part of a better Ontario. If the honourable member has a problem with that, perhaps that's why he's in second place, and perhaps that's why he should spend more time worrying about the end of the month and the Liberal convention than these petty accusations that are baseless in fact and have no place in a place, the Ontario Legislature, that is supposed to be debating the real issues.

Mr McGuinty: The minister talks a great deal about the public record, so let's review the public record one more time. You sent a letter advocating on behalf of a developer in connection with a matter that was before the Ontario Municipal Board. That is clear and unequivocal and true. Yesterday you said you knew nothing about two groups of companies which have contributed \$378,000 to your party. That's what you said yesterday. Today we provided evidence to you that in fact your riding association received thousands of dollars from these same two groups of companies. Those are all matters of public record.

Given the record, the only honourable thing to do in the circumstances, the right thing to do in the circumstances, is to acknowledge that you've made some terrible mistakes and to stand up here and resign.

Hon Mr Clement: I make this pledge to the House: If the honourable member had a shred, a scintilla of evidence—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I say to all the members, I need to hear the answer. I want to be perfectly clear: I'm warning all the members to please come to order.

Minister of the Environment.

Hon Mr Clement: If he has a shred or a scintilla of evidence, I encourage him to place it before this House,

say it outside the House, refer it to the Integrity Commissioner. If he can't do any of those things, he's just not up to the job.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock.

Start the clock. New question.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Solicitor General and it's about his government's law enforcement priority. The Solicitor General will know that a poll was released today reporting that 48% of the people living in Toronto feel less safe than they did five years ago; and the lower your income, the more likely you are to be afraid on the streets of this city. It's just another sign of the growing gap in our province.

The poll also tells us that people want to be protected on the streets where they live. They want to see more community policing in their neighbourhoods. But Statistics Canada tells us that there are fewer police now on the streets than in 1995. In fact, there are 283 fewer police on the streets in Ontario, and when you factor in population growth, there are 1,400 fewer police officers now than in 1995.

Could you tell us, Minister, how are you going to deal with the real issues of crime prevention in Ontario when you have 1,400 fewer police officers on the street now than five years ago?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Let me start by saying, first of all, that we strongly believe in community policing. That's number one right off the top.

The real facts of the matter are that in Ontario since 1995 there has been an increase in the number of uniformed personnel in the OPP. We are directly responsible for the OPP.

1440

Secondly, there has been an increase in spending on province-wide policing in the province. We've also embarked upon what I believe is a very important program, which is the community policing program. The program will invest \$150 million into getting 1,000 brand new police officers on the front line directly to address your concern, front-line policing.

Certainly I've seen the signs of other types of really good police initiatives in Hamilton, in Guelph, in areas where they're attempting to increase their own availability on the streets, the city of Toronto as well. You recently saw their initiative to try to get more police officers out on the street. I compliment Chief Boothby and Mayor Lastman on that, because it did work.

We support this. Obviously we've been spending more money in this area. I think \$150 million is significant. I think 1,000 new police officers is significant as well.

Mr Hampton: The minister wants to refer to his announcement. The fact is—and Statistics Canada confirms this—that despite all of your announcements, despite all of your ballyhoo about going out there after squeegee

kids, there are 1,400 less police officers. Your so-called announcements will not even keep up with the natural rate of retirement of existing police officers.

We also know that people out there are very worried about crimes of sexual assault. Go to Scarborough and you'll find out how worried. They're very worried about the number of women who are victims of sexual assault: 2,000 alone in Toronto. They're very worried about hate crimes.

Minister, how are you going to deal with the serious issues of crime out there when you're 1,400 police officers behind where you should be?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First of all, I want to reiterate that the police force for which we are directly responsible, the OPP, has increased their numbers from 1995, when there were 4,719 OPP officers, to today, when there are 4,888. That is an increase. We strongly believe—and I could say this again, sincerely—it's important for us to have more front-line policing out there. We understand it's important to the communities. That's why we have initiated getting 1,000 more police officers out there. This is funded by the province, understand that, even though there are municipal forces involved with this. We understand it's important. We're doing something about it.

You alluded before to sexual assault, for example. Let me just say to that that one of the important initiatives we have is adequacy standards across the province. That's to make sure that every community is able to cope with all aspects of crime within their community, including that.

Mr Hampton: Minister, if you take the Statistics Canada numbers and you factor in natural population growth, in two years you're going to be 2,200 police officers short, 2,200 police officers fewer than you should be. That means police officers don't have the time to investigate sexual assault. That means they don't have the time to look after home invasions. It means they don't have the time to look after hate crime. Then you're going to take another 1,000 police officers and you're going to turn them loose on squeegee kids.

Everything you've said here today demonstrates how phony your government's whole strategy is. You come out with a propaganda campaign, but underneath the propaganda campaign, you have less police officers than ever before to deal with serious crime-prevention issues. You're short police officers right now. You're going to be 2,200 short two years from now. How are you going to deal with the real issues of serious crime, never mind the squeegee kids?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I think we do have a commitment to policing, and we do have a commitment to front-line policing. We also understand the need to get more police officers out there in the communities. That's why we've doubled the capacity for bringing new recruits through the Ontario Police College. I believe that's very important.

The adequacy standards are very important. Let me just speak about that for a second. Because many communities don't have the ability to deal with some aspects

of crime within their communities—you mentioned sexual assault; that's a very difficult, tough crime—we should have the means—it doesn't matter where you live, the north, the east, the south—we should be able to deal with these things.

I must say to the leader of the third party that I'm quite surprised. Your record, when you were the government, certainly doesn't reflect your new-found interest in policing. If you ask the police community who they believe are supporting their efforts to have better policing in this province, it's not you. It's our government.

SPORTS FACILITY TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Acting Premier. We've heard what the government doesn't have money for: They don't have money to put police officers on the street. I want to ask the Acting Premier now about something they do have money for: subsidizing NHL hockey franchises.

I asked yesterday, Minister, if your government would commit to public hearings so that the people of Ontario could have a say in whether or not taxpayers' money should be used to subsidize NHL hockey millionaires. You refused. So I went out and did a little street poll of my own this morning. The member for Sault Ste Marie and I went down to Union Station, where a lot of people from across the greater Toronto area congregate, and we asked people, "What is your opinion?" Not a surprise to me, Minister, that 74 out of the 80 people we talked to said your idea to subsidize NHL hockey franchises is nonsense.

Minister, what are you afraid of? Why don't you hold public hearings and ask the people of Ontario if they favour taxpayer subsidies for NHL hockey millionaires?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think the leader of the third party got the answer yesterday. I'm not sure which part he doesn't understand. The policy is to level the playing field between municipally owned arenas and private-sector-owned arenas, and it's up to the municipalities. I don't know what you have against local elected officials who are close to their communities deciding if they'd like to level that playing field in terms of their sports arenas or facilities.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): We as a party have no difficulty with government playing an active role in building a value-added economy and creating good jobs. However, in putting the casino into Windsor and restructuring Algoma Steel and St Marys Paper, for example, we didn't give tax breaks. The boards of education or the municipalities in those communities did not lose one cent in taxes.

What we don't support, Minister, are tax breaks for NHL hockey millionaires. That's just another way of your government widening the growing gap between the rich and the poor in this province, with the middle class

being ultimately squeezed out. Most people I've talked to agree with us. They just don't see how this government can find money for NHL hockey when the needs are so great for home care, for schools, for child care and for housing that working families can afford.

Minister, why don't you get it? Why don't you understand the difference here?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I think everyone in Ontario gets the difference between the NDP and our party. You are in favour of higher taxes and we're not. We're in favour of prosperity, letting people keep their own money. Under this particular policy, we're levelling the playing field between municipally owned recreation facilities and private-sector-owned recreational facilities, and it's up to the local council to decide, in consultation with the other ratepayers in that class, whether they want to take advantage of that. If they say yes, then the province will be a partner in that.

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. Minister, yesterday we asked you about the Ontario Realty Corp, a government agency responsible for potentially up to \$5 billion of sales of government land and headed up by your good friend Tony Miele.

Yesterday we asked you about allegations of corruption and bid-rigging at the Ontario Realty Corp as outlined and alleged in court documents filed in a lawsuit over the property at Jarvis and Wellesley that the ORC had put for sale. Today we're aware of three other lawsuits in regard to the Ontario Realty Corp, one involving a property on Lake Muskoka in Gravenhurst, and two others that are still outstanding.

In response to a question by my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt, you said you were not aware of any allegations of corruption and that none of these have been brought to your attention, and you said you would check the records.

Can I ask you, first of all, have you checked those records? Second, when were you made aware of these lawsuits and the allegations they contain that are now in front of the courts?

1450

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr Speaker, through you to the member opposite: I have asked legal staff to review some newspaper articles and the allegations in them. Legal staff tell me there are no substantiated allegations of corruption in the transcripts. I caution the member that we're only part way into this legal proceeding. I can't talk about the details, but legal staff do review the transcripts and, through the course of monitoring this situation, they inform me that there are no substantiated allegations of corruption.

With respect to your question of any other allegation, the answer is "no." If you have any evidence that would

suggest otherwise, I ask you to please share it with us and we'll take the proper steps.

Mr Agostino: Documents were filed in court on February 3, 1999, that allege wrongdoing at the Ontario Realty Corp. There was an article on May 29 in the *Globe and Mail* that spoke of the same allegations.

We understand clearly, in the documents filed in court, that Mr Lyons, your friend and Conservative fundraiser, made some very clear allegations of wrongdoing at the Ontario Realty Corp in his defence. The company Cityscape that was involved in the bid also made some very serious allegations in regard to bid-rigging and corruption at the Ontario Realty Corp. We know that. That is part of the court record; that is part of the public record today.

You're telling us, Minister, that nowhere along the line since these documents were filed were you ever briefed on these lawsuits or made aware of the fact that the Ontario Realty Corp was faced with some very significant allegations, at a time where the agency was undergoing change, at a time when the agency was involved in massive land sales where the credibility of the process and the integrity of the bidding process was absolutely essential.

Minister, again—with what you know, based on the protocol we talked about, that your government spoke about—will you refer this to the Attorney General's office for investigation to determine whether there is any evidence that these allegations are true and if they need to be investigated by the police in this province.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I think I just answered that to the first question. The answer is no, there have been no allegations to that affect. If you have any information like that, please share it with us.

In your preamble, you make all kinds of loose accusations. If you truly believe that, say it outside. You are slandering people's reputations in this chamber with total immunity, knowing you are safe from any legal repercussion.

I don't know if this is the Liberal strategy of the month to try to divert attention from your upcoming leadership review, and all of McGuinty's Muppets are out throwing mud at innocent people.

If you have true evidence or you suspect you do, please share it with this House. Otherwise you are impugning the reputation of a lot of people with your wild accusations.

The Speaker: New question.

ONTARIO'S AIR SERVICE

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources.

I understand Ontario owns one of the world's oldest air services. Since this air fleet falls under your ministry, could you provide us with information on what the government does to support this service and what important role they play in Ontario?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford for the question.

Ontarians have a lot to be proud of with the air service fleet. The fleet, as I'm sure most Ontarians know, has been used for forest fire prevention, for putting out forest fires, for aerial rabies baiting—in which we are a world leader—for wildlife surveys and for a variety of other activities.

But I think the member might be interested in knowing that this fleet started some 75 years ago with 13 surplus World War I airplanes.

They were purchased in 1924 at a cost of \$7,500 apiece. Today's fleet is worth over \$250 million, including some of the most up-to-date firefighting equipment, the CL-415s which this government purchased a year or so ago to make sure we have the most up-to-date fleet in the world. In fact, the Ontario government air service is the oldest continuous-flying, non-scheduled government air service in the world, and we have a lot to be proud of.

Mr Tascona: Thank you very much, Minister, for that valuable information. I'm glad to see that Ontario is active throughout the province and North American in providing valuable services.

I understand that Ontario's air service celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. Could the minister provide us with the highlights on the success of this service for the last 75 years.

Hon Mr Snobelen: As I mentioned before, we have a very up-to-date, modern fleet. But I didn't mention the people who make that fleet operate, our pilots and the ground people who keep that fleet in service, because they are brave, daring and very skilled people who have pioneered aviation in Canada.

They are the world's best, as I said at the aerial rabies baiting. I was proud to be in Texas last year as I watched Ontario export that technology and that expertise. How proud I was of the people who make that service work.

Ontario has been the cradle of bush flying in Canada. In fact, some of the people who were pioneers in Ontario's air service went on to fight for freedom in the Second World War, and we are very proud of their contribution.

Next Friday in Sault Ste Marie, people who have retired from the air service and people who are currently with the air service will gather together to be proud of their 75 years of service. Ontarians can be proud of their courage, their innovation and their leadership.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): To the Minister of the Environment: I would like you to clear up a very serious contradiction between you and your predecessor, Mr Gilchrist, over the proposed development freeze on the Oak Ridges moraine.

As you well know, a respected member of the community, Mr Glenn De Baeremaeker, has categorically stated that your predecessor in municipal affairs, Steven

Gilchrist, told him that he and his ministry were on the verge of imposing a development freeze on the Oak Ridges moraine, and he said that to him on July 20. You, on the other hand, have stated that there were no plans to impose a development freeze on the moraine and that your ministry had not been considering a freeze.

Why this dramatic change and contradiction from a promised freeze from Mr Gilchrist to your opposition to a freeze and denying that the ministry had even contemplated this?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I have no knowledge of what Mr Gilchrist said or didn't say, or did or didn't do. The matter is under investigation, and I think I'm going to refrain from commenting further on it.

Mr Colle: I take your answer to mean that there were no plans in the ministry for a development freeze.

As you know, a freeze on development in the Oak Ridges moraine could cost developers hundreds of millions of dollars in potential profit from developing the moraine.

My question to you is, why the change in position and the refusal to impose a freeze? Could you tell this House, since you've become Minister of Municipal Affairs, whether you've had any discussions with developers, their agents or representatives, or with members of the Urban Development Institute, about this issue of the development freeze on the Oak Ridges moraine? Have you discussed this freeze issue with those development representatives?

Hon Mr Clement: To say that the honourable member is on a fishing expedition is to be insulting to fishermen, so I'm not going to do that.

I don't know what the honourable member is talking about. If the honourable member has any evidence of anything that is untoward, please table it. I'd be happy to come under any form of accountability that the honourable member wants to propose.

The honourable member is making an allegation or an implication that is simply not supported by the facts. I can tell the honourable member that the only thing that has been done is applying the guidelines that were put in place in 1991 by the NDP. I indicated yesterday that we have sought party status before the OMB, so there will be government of Ontario lawyers at the OMB hearings, and that's the status of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Please come to order. New question.

1500

BUSINESS CLIMATE

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Labour. The Harris government has created some 571,000 net new jobs over the last four years. As promised, we're on track for some 725,000 net new jobs by June 2000. This is due, of course, to the stimulation of the economy by cutting

taxes, cutting red tape, and the result of the hard work of the Harris government.

However, last week, Mathews Conveyor of Port Hope closed their 75-year-old plant after a bitter two-month strike and moved to the US; 110 employees lost their jobs. I suspect union representatives and management were working on different wavelengths.

Minister, when will you ensure that we have a level playing field between management and labour in Ontario?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you very much for the question. Obviously we're very concerned about the announced closure and the impact on the employees and the families in Port Hope. This is not something that we like to see nor are happy to see.

We're not aware of the details, either. These are private negotiations that take place between union and management, and these kinds of negotiations take place outside the purview of the Ministry of Labour.

As far as a level playing field is concerned, I think we've achieved a level playing field. I think it's certainly more level than it has been in a long time. We've had a 96% success rate in settlements without strikes or lock-outs. These unfortunate incidents do occur, and I can only hope that in the future negotiations such as this can reach a fruitful end.

Mr Galt: Thank you, Minister, for the answer. There is no question that the Harris government has made significant steps to level that playing field. However, when major operations in rural Ontario close or relocate, it is indeed a major loss to the respective communities. Therefore, can the people of Ontario be assured that this government is doing something to prevent companies from packing their bags for the US in the future?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes, certainly. Our government has created a competitive business climate, lowered taxes, reduced barriers to business, cut red tape, reduced the deficit. Those kinds of things have been done by this government, in fact, to create the climate for prosperity and economic growth.

Another good example would be, for instance, the Quebec-Ontario situation. That's a situation where we've worked very hard, which previous governments didn't do, to get labour mobility for Ontarians in the Quebec jurisdiction, something they haven't had for 30 years.

I'll tell you something. I know the member from across the floor made a statement on this today, but I think the people of this province are in favour of this kind of proactive approach to labour mobility, free access to Quebec, that they weren't getting under previous administrations. I was profoundly disappointed not to have a question put to me on this, because this is the kind of activity, this is the kind of direction, this is the kind of place this government should go for the people.

I see the cackling from the member for Kingston over there, who I'm surprised would heckle this government on their position with Quebec—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Time. Order. Minister, take your seat.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Housing.

Today the former Minister of Housing at the federal level, Mr Redway, the former provincial Minister of Housing, Mr Sweeney, and former member of Parliament and former mayor of Ottawa, M^{me} Dewar, released this study called *Where's Home? Part II*, which shows, among other things, that across Ontario a stunning 300,000 tenants are at risk of homelessness. The study shows the problem affects not just Toronto but many other communities, from Guelph to Hamilton, from Timmins to Kingston to Peterborough. It's part of the growing gap. The majority of Ontarians are well-housed, but more than 300,000 people pay more than 50% of their income in rent.

Minister, your policy of leaving the construction of housing to the private sector has been a complete failure. Will you start building some affordable rental housing so people are not left in the street?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question and indeed wish to inform the House that there are 275,000 social housing units and rent-geared-to-income subsidies that are maintained by this government. We've also committed \$45 million this year to fund 1,000 new dedicated supportive housing units, which will provide support and housing to individuals with problems such as mental illness or addiction.

Now we can share the other records of the previous governments under the old Liberal regime. Housing starts declined by 21.4%. The NDP were even worse when his government was in power. They failed to act while rental housing starts plummeted by 74.4%.

The honourable member, if he has some suggestions on how to improve this—we are leading by example. We've eliminated the first \$2,000 PST on new rental unit developments. We've created a new lower tax class for rental properties. We're committing the use of public lands to create a minimum of 500 units for affordable housing. We are acting and we are proud of that record.

Mr Marchese: Minister, sometimes I don't know whether I should cry or laugh when I hear such answers. But I want to show you more graphically what I mean.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp says that we need—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member knows that he cannot use props. I ask him to please withdraw it.

Member, continue.

Mr Marchese: The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp says that we needed 80,000 rental housing units to be built in Ontario between years 1996 and 2001. They don't care who builds them, whether it's the private sector or the public sector, but they say we need 80,000 units. At the current rate, we're only going to get about

6,000 units built by the year 2001. That's 74,000 households that won't get the housing they need.

Minister, your faith in the private sector to bail you out is pure ideological naïveté. It's completely out of step with reality. If the private sector cannot build the housing we need and the public sector, federal and provincial, is unwilling to do so, who do you think is going to build these units that we need?

Hon Mr Clement: It is unusual to be in complete agreement with a member of the Liberal Party, but I want to quote from Phil Dewan, who is the honourable Leader of the Opposition's chief of staff, who said in June of 1998 that there has been a milestone—he uses the term “milestone” deliberately—because our new Tenant Protection Act, which was called into law on June 17, marks the end of the NDP era of punitive legislation which had such a negative impact on the preservation of the rental housing stock in the province.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition's chief of staff is absolutely right. Under a Mike Harris government, between 1995 and 1998, private rental unit starts have more than doubled and total housing starts have increased by 50%. Obviously our plan is working. Do we have more to do? We absolutely do. We have to finish the job that we've started to increase the rental housing stock, to increase the housing stock in Ontario, but we are making miles more gains than were made under his administration when housing stocks were reduced by 74.4%.

TUITION FEES

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. On a regular basis, including the recent throne speech, this government has gone on record promising the youth of this province that every qualified and motivated student will have access to a quality post-secondary educational experience.

This promise seems very hollow in light of what is happening to tuition costs and student debt in this province. Tuition increases averaged 9.6% this fall in Ontario, the largest increase in the country, continuing the disturbing trend towards a two-tier system and the imposition of a crippling debt load for our students.

Statistics from your own ministry indicate that since 1995 the tuition cost for an arts or science undergraduate degree has gone up 58% and the cost of a college diploma has risen 52%. This is hardly making the situation more accessible. Students are now bearing 35% of the cost of operating our universities.

Minister, what specific steps are you taking to put a stop to this unacceptable spiral of increasing tuition costs?

1510

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to begin by welcoming my colleague from Hamilton Mountain to this great Legislative Assembly and by letting the members

of the House know that I think she's extremely well qualified for this critic portfolio.

I'm also proud to agree with her that we are committed, as governments before us have been committed, to making sure that every qualified and motivated student will indeed have access to post-secondary education in the province of Ontario. I'm proud also to say that at this point in time the accessibility to post-secondary education in Ontario has never been greater. Right now, 35% of young people who want to go on to college and university are in our colleges and universities as we speak. That's a very high number. We're also supporting that commitment by providing the highest level of provincial funding support ever in post-secondary education, which will rise to \$4 billion this year.

Just to conclude, I'd like to say that this year we're also providing the most assistance ever to students in our colleges and universities.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Minister, I believe you have co-authored the document that said students shouldn't subsidize more than 25%. That's 10% lower than they are subsidizing right now. Since 1995, as well, according to your own statistics, the annual Ontario student assistance program expenditures are up 280%. What this means is that students are being forced to take on more and more debt to compensate for this government's underfunding of post-secondary education. Will the minister today ensure the House that the student's share of the cost of his or her quality education will not be increased any further?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: In response, I'd like to remind the House that the Liberal and NDP governments also raised tuition fees. At the same time, we have taken actions that they did not take. It is a fact that the tuition has risen, but in the last two years the colleges and universities have been asked to set aside 30% of those funds to assist those students in colleges and universities who are in need. That's over and above what we're doing at the provincial level to help students in need. We're also providing more assistance, as I stated, than ever before. For the record, that's up 30% in assistance over 1995, to \$535 million.

We are also asking the universities to prepare students for jobs in high-demand areas where there are shortages. Our students are getting those jobs. They are investing fairly in their education—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Time. Would the minister take her seat.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question is to the Minister of Correctional Services. Recently, as I travelled through my riding, on Highway 25 there was a great deal of construction going on around the Maplehurst Correctional Complex in Milton. I recall that changes are underway within our provincial correctional services and that Maplehurst is one of those facilities that is being

upgraded. I believe it's being upgraded into one of the largest correctional facilities in Canada.

There's a great deal of concern in the community as to first of all when it will be finished, what the progress of the construction is. Second, we also understand that the female inmates from the Vanier Centre, which is being phased out, are going to be transferred to that area, so there would be male and female facilities. We're concerned about security and public safety. I wonder if you could enlighten my constituents on that subject.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I thank the honourable member for his question. I was actually pleased to visit the Maplehurst site as part of my ongoing tours of correctional facilities in Ontario since I was appointed Minister of Correctional Services. I'm happy to report that the construction at that particular site is moving along quite well. Of course, we're expanding that site from 600 beds to nearly 1,500 beds. I want to thank the staff who are running the correctional facilities now for their patience and co-operation as we go through this transformation project at Maplehurst and frankly across the province, transferring and upgrading the technology and infrastructure that's involved in the correctional business in this province. It's very important that we speak to the words that were spoken to us by the Provincial Auditor in 1993, when he indicated to us that some effort was required on behalf of government to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of institutions such as Maplehurst.

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I recall in the throne speech, and I quote, "The government will continue to replace aging jails with more secure facilities." We're well aware in our community of the support that our community has for boot camps and strict discipline procedures holding facilities for youth.

We're concerned that in the Maplehurst experience this money be wisely spent. We're spending a great deal of money because it's a huge expansion. Is that money being well spent, or could it be better spent someplace else?

Hon Mr Sampson: Thank you very much to the member. We're going through this infrastructure renewal project at corrections to indeed ensure that our capital money and our operational money that we spend in corrections, dealing with the inmates in those various institutions, is wisely spent. But we have to make sure at the same time that these institutions are indeed safe not only for those who are working within the institutions themselves but for those who live in and around the communities where the institutions reside.

So I say to the honourable member that public safety is an utmost priority of this government and this minister and certainly this ministry as it relates to the functioning of those particular institutions. We are also mindful of the fact that we must operate these institutions and deal with the inmates who are sent to our custody by the court system in an effective and efficient manner. That is why we are going through this renewal project, so that we can have the infrastructure there that will allow us to meet those two very important criteria.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question, the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like unanimous consent for Jean-Marc Lalonde to ask a question on the Quebec-Ontario—

The Speaker: Agreed?

Interjections.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Well, my question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, we're all aware of the severe shortage of doctors in Ontario. As a matter of fact, in my own riding, the Kingston Academy of Medicine and individual doctors' offices, as well as my own constituency office, get up to 50 to 70 calls per day from people looking for a family physician. As a matter of fact, in your own throne speech you acknowledged the shortage of doctors by accepting the proposal from our own leader, Dalton McGuinty, to do something about cutting the fees to medical school.

In light of all that, can you explain how your colleague and your seatmate, the former Minister of Health, could possibly say in this House last Monday, and I will quote from Hansard: "The Ontario Medical Association is starting their tactics and their stories about foreign-trained doctors and their stories about not enough doctors, that somehow it's a supply problem and not a demand problem. I tell you, we have enough general practitioners and family practitioners" in this province? Who are the people of Ontario to believe, especially those who are looking for a family physician, you or the former Minister of Health? Minister, you're in charge of the health of the people of Ontario. What are you going to do about—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will the member take his seat. Minister of Health.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member opposite well knows, our government has indicated that we are well aware of the facts, that the issue of distribution, when it comes to physicians, is an issue that we are studying. In fact, Dr McKendry is presently having a fact-finding commission. He's taking a look at the scope of the problem, where does it exist, and he's trying to determine, why does it exist? It's very, very important that we determine the scope and also the reasons for this issue of distribution.

His report will be forthcoming shortly. All of the information will be provided to an expert panel, and we will be moving forward to develop strategic directions, both short-term and long-term, to ensure that people throughout this province, no matter where they live, will have access to primary care and specialists.

1520

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Minister, how disastrous does the situation have to be, whether it's in Kingston or in Thunder Bay or in Niagara or in Kitchener-Waterloo, before you're prepared to

acknowledge that there is a shortage? This is not just a distribution problem, as your colleague the former Minister of Health suggested in this House this week. It is not just a distribution problem when 25% of the people in this province do not have a family doctor.

You sent Dr McKendry out in order to study whether there is a problem. In the time that you sent him out, there were 87 communities officially underserved for family doctors—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Energy. Member.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was suggesting to the Minister of Health that when Dr McKendry began there were 87 communities officially underserved for family doctors—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I won't warn the Minister of Energy again. I've warned him on two occasions. This is his last warning. Member.

Mrs McLeod: The former Minister of Health is concerned because his community is one of those underserved area communities. Since Dr McKendry set out, there are now 99 communities officially underserved. His report is going to be outdated before it is ever tabled.

Minister, we need you to acknowledge that there is a shortage and we ask you to make a commitment today to deal with this shortage by increasing medical school enrolment by at least 15% and by immediately providing community residency placements for foreign-trained physicians now in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member is well aware of the fact that our government has undertaken numerous initiatives to address the issue of distribution and supply. We have also certainly acknowledged in our Blueprint document that we would be supplying and making sure that all those students who were entering medical school or were in medical school at the present time would have their tuition reimbursed if they were prepared to go to underserved areas.

I think if you take a look at all of the initiatives, we have always indicated we are well aware of the fact that there is an issue related to supply, related to distribution, and that is the issue Dr McKendry is addressing. Also, if there are immediate solutions, we will move forward.

It's important to put it in perspective. It is, to a large degree, an issue of distribution as much as it is an issue of supply. We need to make sure we have the right mix.

IMMIGRANT SPONSORSHIP

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. People in Scarborough and throughout the province believe that governments have a responsibility to manage their tax dollars wisely and well. There's a growing concern over news that some immigrant sponsors are not living up to their obligations and that, as a result, Ontario taxpayers are on the hook for over \$100

million. This concern was raised to me a few weeks ago as I was canvassing on Pegasus Trail in my riding.

The federal government establishes the criteria for who can sponsor and they sign off on each sponsor and sponsoring agreement. Sponsors specifically commit that they cannot allow their sponsoree to go on social assistance. How is it that taxpayers in Ontario and the city of Toronto, like my friends on Pegasus Trail, are having to bail out the federal government and sponsors who fail to live up to their obligations?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to say at the outset that this government and the people of Ontario strongly support immigration. It has contributed a significant amount to our society, particularly to the Ontario economy. We are concerned, however, about the large number of sponsors who are not living up to their obligations and that these obligations are not being enforced by the federal government.

The lack of sponsorship criteria that allows a sponsor to shirk his or her responsibilities is a genuine concern to us. We believe that the federal government must ensure that prospective sponsors have the means to be able to honour a sponsorship obligation that they undertake.

The federal government's unwillingness to get tough with deadbeat sponsors has real and serious consequences for the people of Ontario, for taxpayers at the provincial level in Toronto, in Peel and in Ottawa. It's costing taxpayers more than \$100 million a year in this province to pick up the slack of the federal government.

We're not talking about a few isolated incidents. Today in Ontario, upwards of 17,000 people are on social assistance as a result of the federal government's inaction. It's time that the federal government acted and protected Ontario taxpayers and taxpayers in Toronto, Peel and Ottawa.

VISITOR

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Sitting in the government member's gallery, as I know everyone would like to note, is the Speaker's mother, Mrs Carr. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member will know that is not a point of order, but I thank him for that.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I am looking for unanimous consent, in light of what the government House leader said earlier, to allow the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell to have a question.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the member? No, I didn't hear any.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent on Monday, November 15, that the leadoff question be given to Jean-Marc Lalonde to ask about the Quebec-Ontario agreement.

The Speaker: Petitions?

PETITIONS

DIALYSIS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I want to present a petition that has been signed by some 89 individuals from the Penetang and Midland area who are concerned about the need for support for a permanent dialysis unit in the Midland and Penetanguishene area. They have been told by the government that this satellite dialysis unit cannot be approved until April 2000. They are concerned about families in their area who have to drive more than 50 kilometres to Orillia three times a week and who need the service closer to their homes, particularly in winter when the driving conditions can often be hazardous. They have asked, through their petition, to have a permanent dialysis unit approved for this fall so those winter driving conditions can be avoided.

I am pleased to sign my own signature in agreement with their concerns.

MARRIAGE

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): I have a petition, entitled Defence of Marriage, signed by over 5,000 individuals. It indicates as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the majority of Canadians believe that fundamental matters of social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament and the legislatures, and not the unelected judiciary; and

"Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada in the M. and H. case has rejected biology, tradition and societal norms to redefine the term 'spouse' to include the non-creative partnerships of homosexual couples, and has effectively granted these relationships 'equivalent-to-married' status; and

"Whereas the court's decision will devalue the institution of marriage, and it is the duty of the Legislature to ensure that marriage, as it has always been known and understood, be preserved and protected;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including invoking section 33 of the charter (the 'notwithstanding clause'), to preserve and protect the commonly understood, exclusive definitions of 'spouse,' 'marriage' and 'family' in all areas of provincial law."

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which I would like to read.

"Whereas due to the Harris funding cuts to education, school boards are being forced to consider the closing of schools in the city of Toronto; and

"Whereas parents do not want the schools to close and fear for the chaos and crisis if the Harris government is imposing more cuts on education and this will hurt their children; and

"Whereas there is apprehension and turmoil in the community that due to government rules to determine school capacity hundreds of students will have to find a new school come next September;

"Now, therefore, we the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"We call upon the Minister of Education, who has the primary responsibility for providing a quality education for each and every student in Ontario to:

"(1) Listen to the views being expressed by teachers and parents who are concerned by the implications and disruptive effects the school closures will have on their children;

"(2) Recognize the fundamental importance of our local schools to our neighbourhood communities; and

"(3) Live up to its commitment to provide adequate funding for the important and essential components of a good education and not allow the closing of schools."

It is quite a good message. I'm willing to support it and I will affix my signature to it.

1530

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition that's signed by a number of Kingstonians in my riding. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I am in agreement with this petition and I have signed it as such.

HENLEY ROWING COURSE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the Henley rowing course in St Catharines is an outstanding rowing facility which has for several decades been the site for hundreds of international rowing competitions;

"Whereas the World Rowing Championship has been held in St Catharines in 1970 and 1999 and has been declared an outstanding success on both occasions;

"Whereas the municipal, provincial and federal governments, along with generous private donors, invested several million dollars in the upgrading of the Henley rowing course to enable the 1999 World Rowing Championship to be held in St Catharines and that as a result the Henley is a first-class rowing facility;

"Whereas the organizing committee of the World Rowing Championship, the annual Royal Canadian Henley Regatta and other prestigious regattas, has the proven expertise to operate major, international rowing competitions;

"Whereas all taxpayers in Ontario will be compelled to contribute to any financial assistance provided by the Ontario government for the Olympic bid of the city of Toronto;

"Whereas the creation of a new rowing facility outside of St Catharines for the Toronto Olympic bid would result in the unnecessary expenditures of millions of dollars to duplicate the St Catharines rowing facility;

"Whereas the rowing facility for several, recent Olympic Games has been located outside of the sponsoring and host city;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to persuade the Toronto Olympic bid committee to propose the Henley rowing course in St Catharines as a site of the rowing competition for the 2008 Olympic Games."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition.

PARAMEDICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health this past spring amended O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record; and

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment; and"—again, Speaker, I draw to your attention that's six paramedics now and at least two from Hamilton—

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation's, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points and suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period; and

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, eg, fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished so harshly; and

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics (specifically O. Reg. 501/97, part III, section 6, subsections 8, 9 and 10); and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics;

"Therefore, we the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any references to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act (specifically, part III, section 6, subsection 7), thereby allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been fired under the regulation."

I believe today the government is finally caving in and doing the right thing and changing this regulation, thanks very much in part to the work of their union and the support of the NDP caucus in this Legislature.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know the rules of the House have changed with respect to quorum, but I believe that right now we're well below even the new rules relating to quorum. I wonder if you could check the quorum numbers, please.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Please check for quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAXPAYER PROTECTION
AND BALANCED BUDGET ACT, 1999LOI DE 1999
SUR LA PROTECTION DES
CONTRIBUABLES
ET L'ÉQUILIBRE BUDGÉTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 2, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 7, An Act to protect taxpayers against tax increases, to establish a process requiring voter approval for proposed tax increases and to ensure that the Provincial Budget is a

balanced budget / *Projet de loi 7, Loi protégeant les contribuables des augmentations d'impôt, établissant un processus d'approbation des projets d'augmentation d'impôt par les électeurs et garantissant l'équilibre du budget provincial.*

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I'm pleased to provide the leadoff debate for the NDP caucus, my first opportunity to do so as the freshly minted finance critic, and look forward to my new role.

Having served as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance in a previous life, for two years prior to entering into cabinet myself, I've enjoyed seeing staff I worked with before in terms of the briefings and relish the opportunity to talk about arguably the single most important thing that governments do, and that is the setting of budgets and the prioritizing of expenditures and hopefully—I would argue not very much in the case of the current government—during the course of a term of government improving the quality of life.

The first thing I'd like to do is to dispel a couple of myths that I know some of my colleagues from across the way on the government side of the House like to perpetuate. Of course, that is that the NDP can't manage anything and you can't trust them to manage the store and the only ones you can rely on are good, true, hard right-wingers because they're the only ones who can be grown up enough to manage the economy, and all that kind of nonsense. Let's look at a couple of things in that regard before we go any further at all.

In terms of history, this government likes to point to the term of office that we were in power, from 1990-95, and use that to substantiate all their allegations. We all know that the recession we faced during the early 1990s was the deepest and most severe we've had in Canada since the Depression in the 1930s. We also know that recession, arguably a depression, was deeper, started sooner and lasted longer in Canada than in any other country in the world, directly because of the policies of the federal government.

Who was that government? It was Mike Harris's cousins, the Mulroneys. They were the ones who were so bound and determined that wringing inflation out of the economy was more important than anything; more important than people's jobs, more important than community, more important than the ability of provinces to maintain and support a health care system, a social service system that, by the way, was under attack because of the fact that unemployment insurance—

1540

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Christopherson: Thanks, Toni.

Mr Skarica: I seek unanimous consent to have the Liberals waive their questions in question period when we come back—

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: What are you doing?

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Oh, come on. And I'll be able to return the favour shortly, Toni. You're down here too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Do we have consent?

Mr Christopherson: No. All I want is an opportunity to have my say.

As I was attempting to say, there was an attack on social services in terms of the cutbacks that the Mulroney government had imposed on unemployment insurance, as it was known then, which pushed a whole lot of people onto social services. And in every other recession that we've had, it was always the federal government that stepped in and was prepared to work with provinces to get them through these difficult times. The Tory government headed up by Brian Mulroney, for the first time ever in Canadian history, backed right off and said: "No, you're on your own. We're not going to do anything to get you through this."

We also had his free trade agreement kicking in, wherein—as you know, Speaker, from another industrialized city like mine, Sault Ste Marie, very similar to Hamilton—we lost in Ontario hundreds of thousands of good-paying industrial sector jobs, because they flew and migrated south with the implementation of the free trade agreement.

The psychological impact of the GST I would argue probably doubled or quadrupled the underground economy because people felt that it was just so unfair. Mulroney's got to take direct responsibility for that.

All these things were happening in the early 1990s, and to listen to the Tories you'd swear that Bob Rae was in charge of the only province in the free world that was running deficits and that they were the only ones who were having serious problems in the economy. I can even hear some of the heckles now, their attempt at humour; they still like to pretend that and play it out. But what's the reality? And I hope the member from Bedrock will pay particular attention to this.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I hate to make this point of order, but the usual decorum in this House, since a lot of members insist on it, is that the member be noted by the geographic district he comes from. Would the member from across the way, the finance critic, start elevating the standards in that regard, please?

The Acting Speaker: It's not a point of order—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The reality is, if we take a look at other provinces—

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I can't let this pass. I fail to understand how you could say that this is not a point of order. I really do ask you to ask the member to refer to members in this House by their riding, and unless there is something that's changed in the orders, I'd appreciate an explanation for that.

The Speaker: I stand corrected. Members should refer to other members by their ridings.

Mr Christopherson: Absolutely, Speaker. Thank you.

The record is this: In 1990, in the province of PEI, they went from a \$4-million deficit—that doesn't sound like a lot of money, but relative to the size of the province and the size of their economy, their GDP, these are big numbers—to \$78 million in 1993. New Brunswick: from \$20 million in 1990 to \$297 million in 1993. Manitoba: \$142 million in 1990; a \$566-million deficit run in 1993. Nova Scotia: a \$163-million deficit in 1990; \$617 million in 1993. Quebec: \$1.659 billion to \$4.932 billion. Alberta, the Mecca to which all the Tories here turn: 1990, \$2.116 billion; 1993, \$3.773 billion.

My point is this: These are parties of all political stripes—most of these, if not all of them, are either Liberal or Tory—and they ran into the same kind of problem. That's the reality. It happened everywhere in this country, and was more severe in this country than in any other G7 nation because of the policies of your cousins, the Mulroneys.

What happened with Mulroney in terms of his accumulated debt? When he came into office in 1984, the accumulated debt of Canada was \$157 billion. When he left office in 1993, the accumulated debt was \$466 billion: \$157 billion to \$466 billion.

There's nothing magical about being a Tory that makes you a good fiscal manager. Remember the great Zeus of them all, of the right-wingers?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Reagan?

Mr Christopherson: Reagan, absolutely. What were Reagan's numbers? When he came in in 1981, their deficit was \$78.9 billion. When he left, it was \$155 billion. The accumulated federal debt of the United States under Ronald Reagan, Mr Conservative, Mr Fiscal Conservatism, Mr Fiscal Management, the great guru himself—what was the accumulated federal debt under Ronald Reagan? They went, from the year he took office, from \$994 billion to \$2.6 trillion.

However, they have said and they will continue to say that it was us alone that caused all the economic woes in Ontario in the 1990s. None of the facts support that, none whatsoever.

In terms of the bill we're looking at today, Bill 7, you would think, given the fact that the government introduced the bill, they obviously like this, and given the fact that the Liberals are supporting it—some official opposition on a major fiscal issue like this—and they're on-side—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I'm reminded by the minister of corrections that that's today, and he makes a good point. That could very well change tomorrow and be back again by Monday. Who knows? However, today they are in support on a major economic issue, one of the most important ones as far as the government's concerned.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: The member for Kingston and the Islands says that it's a nothing bill. If it's a nothing

bill, why not oppose it? Why not perform the function of the official opposition on major issues like this and provide some real opposition? No, it's left to the nine of us to carry the can and provide the argument for those who believe this is wrong-headed. We'll do that, and we'll do it with pride.

1550

You know, we're not alone; it's not just us. The Tories and the Liberals are singing from the same song sheet, which is not surprising. That surprises no one. They often sing from the same song sheet. Oh, the Liberals try their little milder version, the "blue light" stuff of what the Tories offer up, but in many cases it's interchangeable, it doesn't make much difference. Had the roles been reversed, we'd be getting much the same economic arguments as we are from the Tories, because they believe in the same fundamental things.

You would think that we're the only ones opposed? Not so. It must come as a real disappointment to the editorial members of the Toronto Star, who make no bones about the fact that by and large, with few exceptions, they support the Liberals. OK, that's no big shock. I'm not slandering them. That's pretty well known. By and large, the Liberals don't tend to stray too far from what the Toronto Star reflects. But on this one they must be immensely disappointed.

The heading of their editorial is: "Affront to Democracy." This is dated October 28. "The Mike Harris government's Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act is an affront to democracy." They end by saying, "Harris, blessed only with good times so far, has left Ontario unusually vulnerable to nasty surprises. This bill can only make bad times worse."

Let's put in on the record that when those bad times come and this government decides to take drastic measures to deal with the fiscal realities that they're going to face, the Liberals shouldn't be allowed to squirm out of it and condemn the government. Because this is the moment in time when you stand up and decide where you are on this issue, and they are with the Tories. Make no mistake about it.

I happen to agree with what the Toronto Star thinks is going to happen. I agree there is going to be a time when you're going to hide behind this bill and do even nastier things than you've already done, and the Liberals are going to have to stand there and say, "We're partly to blame." Because they're not offering up the kind of opposition that's expected from the Official Opposition. They're kowtowing to the Tories and they're going with them on this and they are every bit as much to blame when those decisions come down the pipe as Mike Harris is himself.

Is it just the Toronto Star? No. This bill's been introduced before, you recall. It came into the House and when the House rose for the election the bill died on the order paper, and at that time people were making comments when it was first—I think it was the first or second time. Maybe it's the third actually. Anyway, on December 28, 1998, the London Free Press said, in part,

"On examination, it is little more than political smoke and mirrors." They go on to say, "Perhaps the greatest question is what happens if a government does not tax but needs revenue due to a severe economic downturn short of that five per cent mark?" I'll speak to that a little later. "Do programs and services, such as health care and education, deteriorate due to lack of funding? Vital, but unpopular, services may not garner public support during a referendum." They end with five little words, "This law is not needed."

The Liberals, however, agree with the Tories that it is needed.

In December 1998, the Kitchener Waterloo Record said: "The time for taxpayers to say whether taxes should be raised is during the next election campaign when the three parties should honestly lay out their spending plans and programs. No special legislation is needed for that."

Again from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, there was a report—that was an editorial, this is a report—and these are the comments of Professor Tanguay from Wilfrid Laurier University, a political science professor. In talking about this bill, he said: "It creates a patchwork system where you have some areas doing just fine and other areas in dire straits. You can see that's what will happen—it will further widen the gap between the haves and have-nots."

Anybody who wants to understand more about the gap being referred to should look at *The Growing Gap*, a report issued in October 1998. There will be an update coming, I understand, in another month or so. My colleagues have referred to it. You mentioned it earlier today in response to a ministerial statement. This talks about what's happening in Ontario and across Canada, more so in Ontario because of the policies of the Harris government, where the haves are getting more and the have-nots are getting less, and both of those categories are getting bigger. But it's the middle class, in terms of a larger percentage, that is falling. The majority of them aren't moving into the very wealthy; they're moving into the lower incomes. It's the growing gap and it affects every single person in this province one way or another.

Professor Tanguay goes on to say the legislation is "clever, because who can be opposed to democracy?" and "A simple referendum question should really be a 20-part question" and "It is Machiavellian."

It's only the NDP here in the Legislature that's opposed to it, but across the province there are a lot of other important, influential, credible voices who care about what this could mean in terms of the quality of life to the future of Ontarians who are opposed to this legislation and feel strongly about it.

I want to reflect a bit on probably the best, and certainly the most famous, example that exists in terms of where you can end up, and more than likely will, when you follow this course, this direction with balanced-budget legislation, as this government has drafted it, and the referendum requirements, as attached to it, as this government has done it. I am of course talking about the, in my opinion, infamous California Proposition 13 in

1978. There had been some other referendum issues on the question of referendums and balanced budgets, but this was the most famous and certainly affected the most people.

It was, without going into the details, in a referendum that people voted to impose a balanced-budget type of legislation. Obviously it had some differences, but the direction is the same, the whole notion that governments would be prevented from exercising their fiscal options in terms of increasing revenue in times of need and would have to go to a referendum, to the people. I won't get into all the spin words that Harris is using—they're there on the record to be seen—but that's what Proposition 13 did.

Of course it was hailed by the right-wingers of that day as the Holy Grail. I mean, this was it: If everybody brought in a similar Proposition 13, boy, oh boy, everybody's fiscal problems in terms of municipalities and states and even the federal government would disappear overnight because there would be this discipline in the management of the people's money.

Interjection.

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Mr Christopherson: I hear one of the members across say, "And so it should be." So, you see, some of that lunacy still rings true today. Unfortunately, it happens to come from the side of this House that orders this province around by virtue of their majority government. That's the shame of that kind of thinking.

What happened there? In the 1960s, California was one of the top 10 jurisdictions in terms of education funding. By 1996 the California General Accounting Office reported that 71% of their state schools needed major capital maintenance, and in 1994 they were 41st in terms of funding for education per pupil.

Now take a look at what's happened to Ontario and I believe you'll find that we're somewhere below Arkansas or Tennessee in terms of our per pupil funding. There are a lot of similarities between what happened then and what's happening. It's a real shame it's happening, because we're talking about real people—their families, their lives, their quality of life and their future.

In 1994, as a result of Proposition 13, Orange county, which at the time of the adoption of Proposition 13 was one of the largest and wealthiest municipalities in all of California, with one of the most dynamic local economies, declared bankruptcy. What we have to remember—and this applies now; it's something that's not unknown—is they actually had a referendum on the question of whether they would raise enough taxes to curtail the bankruptcy proceedings, to stave off the bankruptcy, and people voted against it. I can't believe for a minute that the question that was on the ballot was, "Do you believe that we ought to bankrupt our municipality?" I'm sure the wording was along the lines of, "Do you support any taxes being increased?" If it's that straightforward, who among us is going to say yes? Most people will say no; of course they will. Who wants to pay more taxes?

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: No, I don't. Nobody does. That's more of that myth, that garbage that you like to pass around. The fact of the matter is they did polling at the time that showed that people held two conflicting thoughts, and pollsters now will tell you the same phenomenon exists. They want services at least maintained and perhaps increased in terms of education and health care, but at the same time they also want to cut taxes. That's why the professor mentioned that you need a 20-part question to adequately give people an intelligent option to vote on things.

If you make it a bumper-sticker "Yes or No?" and you frame it around, "Do you want to pay more taxes?" 10 times out of 10 it's going to come out, "No." But when you point out to people what it costs and what it means and who ends up losing the most in terms of it being the working middle class and the poor who end up paying the most at the end of the day, you get an entirely different outcome. That's why there are so many people opposed to this.

The Liberals are on side because it's populist. We all know what a Liberal policy convention is: a wet finger in the air. Find out which way the wind's blowing, and that's Liberal policy. To that degree, the Tories and the NDP have at least had a grudging—dare I use the word "respect"?—at least a grudging recognition that there's a whole ideology there that in most cases is somewhat consistent and we attempt to have some consistency. It's this kind of thing that drives us crazy about the Ontario Liberals in particular, wherein they just go with whatever's popular. Whatever's popular at the moment, that's where they are.

Right now they think Harris has the popular tune to be played out there among the electorate, and they're on side. I want to tell you again, when this government starts making the horrible decisions that are going to affect ordinary working families in this province, the Liberals ought to be told that they should shut up in terms of criticizing. You helped make it the law. This is probably not even going to go out to committee or out across the province, because there are only nine members who are opposed to it. If we had the official opposition on side, we may have been able to say to the government House leader at the House leaders' meetings: "You've got to take this thing out. It's too big; it's too important." We don't have a chance.

Before I leave the issue of Orange county, let me just read into the record what the *Globe and Mail* had to say. By and large, the *Globe and Mail* is supportive of Harris and the Tories. Federally, they seem to like Reform a little better. I don't think there's anybody here who's going to argue that this is a horde of socialists holing up inside the editorial boardroom of the *Globe and Mail*. I'm not hearing anything, so I think we all pretty much agree that that's the reality. What did they say about California, and Orange county in particular, in 1995? "In 1995, California represents direct democracy gone awry. A cautionary tale for voters and legislators everywhere."

In discussing the effects of citizen activity through referenda, which diminishes the power of their representatives, the editorial concludes that:

"Representative government has become automatic government. The more the public distrusts politicians, the more it constrains them, which in turn breeds problems of its own. If California represents the future, it doesn't work."

That's the *Globe and Mail*. I don't know what they said about this specific piece of legislation. But in terms of the whole direction, the mother of this idea of all decisions being made through referenda, this is what they had to say about Orange county just a few short years ago.

What about an example here in Canada. Well, we haven't had a lot of experience yet. We have quite a number of provinces that have balanced budget legislation. This is the only one that has attached a referendum as much as they have. The closest other one I'm aware of is Alberta, and it only requires a referendum should the government want to bring in a sales tax. As we know, Alberta doesn't have a sales tax. As a population, they feel strongly about that and so there's this built-in protection.

But no one has gone anywhere near where Mike Harris and the Tories in Ontario are taking us in terms of connecting the two. Certainly the type of restrictive balanced budget legislation they brought in only mirrors Manitoba. When you look at the rest of the provinces, they are not nearly as restrictive as what this government has done, recognizing that it's very much like what they've done in Manitoba.

Before I speak to some of the actual sections of the bill that give me the greatest concern, I want to draw the attention of members a *Globe and Mail* report of December 14, 1998, not that long ago; Alberta had balanced budget legislation. This is the sort of thing that can happen. This is not pretend, this is not make-believe, this is not fear-mongering. This is what happened.

The article says: "The Alberta government will review more than \$200 million of health care spending in wake of Premier Ralph Klein's warning that sagging oil royalties could create a deficit budget."

"We do have lower oil prices than last year's forecast, and there are other parts of the economy we have to be concerned about such as lower agricultural prices, particularly in the hog industry," said the Health Minister.

My point in raising this is that under balanced budget legislation, particularly when Tories are in power, is the absolute fear, and in their case the lawful inability to deal with something that quite frankly had nothing to do with Ralph Klein's government. It's not that he screwed up in some big way. They had a drop in oil prices. There were concerns with other agricultural prices, particularly in the hog industry. I can't imagine that's Ralph Klein's fault. But the reality is, it meant their revenues were going to be lower. What's the first thing they did when they found they were going to have lower revenue that had nothing to do with the rest of their society or their economy?

Boom, out goes the message: Review health care; cut it if you have to.

Two hundred million dollars of health care money that was recommended by members of that Legislature as necessary to reinvest in the very damaged health care system of Alberta was now at risk because, God forbid, there might be a deficit that year. I'm the first to say again: It had nothing to do with the policies of Ralph Klein. When you're dealing with crude oil, prices are set on the global market. Ralph, as much as he'd like to have a say, doesn't get much. But because they had that balanced budget legislation, boom, down comes the axe.

Let me point out, Speaker, that if you have a lot of money, they could cut the health care system all they want. You can take care of it yourself. If you have the money, the means, you can buy your way out of that kind of problem. You can fly your family members down to the States and pay to have things taken care of.

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But if you're an ordinary, working, middle-class family who live paycheque to paycheque, the thought that the government, because of some balanced budget legislation, is about to massively slash health care, is about to affect your family—you're going to be terrified for your kids. And you know what you can do about it? Nothing.

In Ontario, because of Mike Harris's tax gifts to the very wealthy, they've even got more money to take care of themselves if they're in a jam. How did that get paid for? Take a look at our education system in our communities, take a look at our health care system, take a look at the crisis around home care that's happening because the institutional side of our health care system is closing down.

You think I'm just making this up? Speaker, we haven't even got to the point where the balanced budget legislation is in place and what do we have here in Ontario? October 8, this year, a few weeks ago, *Globe and Mail*, same newspaper:

"As many as half Ontario's hospitals can expect a letter from the Ministry of Health today, instructing them to go back to their drawing board to balance their budgets.

"The letters will tell hospitals whether their operating budgets for this fiscal year have been approved, a spokesman for the Ontario Ministry of Health has confirmed....

"The Ministry of Health however was mum on exactly how many hospital budgets are being rejected this year.

"It's a substantial number....

"They (the hospitals) are supposed to work towards a balanced budget."

The second-largest hospital in Canada, in my community, in my riding, the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp, provides health care, and I know that one of the members sitting across the way likes to blame those local officials. That same member likes to blame the trustees for the problem in our education system. That same member from Wentworth-Burlington likes to blame our

local municipal aldermen and councillors. It's always somebody else's fault; it's always somebody else's mismanagement that's causing all these crises. He seems to believe that across the board. But the reality is that our hospital, this major hospital that has phenomenal support in our community, is facing a deficit.

Why? Because, I say to their credit—and I've met with the board. I know a lot of those people. They aren't New Democrats, I can tell you, but they're good people. I've served with them on other boards in other capacities. They're good people and they care. If there's room for more efficiencies in their system, that's the same as anything. But I'll never believe they just sit there and try and screw the numbers and play with the numbers in order to play games with the provincial government in terms of funding. That's not what's going on. They are close to \$40 million in projected deficit. Why? Because they made sure that the service was there and they were going to worry about the politics of arguing the dollars with this government later. God bless them.

Our local school board did the same thing. When this government started cutting transfer payments to education, our local school board trustees said, "We are not going to see JK die because this government cut back on transfer payments." They had the political courage to pass a modest increase to make sure they had the money to keep JK in place. Why? Because our trustees believed all the studies that unquestionably point to the fact that early childhood education works. Our government even mandated that boards had to have JK for that very reason. This government removed that, cut the funding, said, "Okay, now you can eliminate JK if you want." Our board had the courage.

The politics of it? Contrary to what Liberals might think, Ray Mulholland was the chair of the board at that time and he led that argument. So did Judith Bishop, one of the trustees in my riding. Ray was the chair of the board at the time they raised, modestly, those taxes to keep JK in place. Guess what? Judith Bishop is still a school board trustee and Ray Mulholland is still chair of the board. They went out to the people after they had raised the taxes modestly and defended why they did it, and the people of Hamilton supported them.

Was it because they wanted to pay more taxes? No. But when it was explained and they were given the opportunity to understand during the course of an election that the decision was made because here was the choice: a modest increase or we lose JK—not one little bumper-sticker question that you answer yes or no: "Do you want your education taxes to go up?" If that had been the question, the answer undoubtedly would have overwhelmingly been no. Because it happened during the course of an election debate, people had an opportunity to hear the whole argument, and they re-elected those very same trustees that members of this government went after.

We haven't even got to the balanced budget legislation yet and that's the sort of message that went out, not much

different than the message in Alberta. That's what happens with this sort of thing.

Earlier I was mentioning that I was going to come back to my friend from Wentworth-Burlington. I'm reading from Tuesday's Hansard. Toni was the leadoff for the government. The member for Wentworth-Burlington touched on an issue—and the only reason I'm doing this, by the way, Toni, is because you know the rules of the streets in the area that you and I grew up in. You took the first punch. You went in here and went after the NDP before I even started to put together my comments, and now I need to return the favour.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: At least it'll be a fair fight, unlike the fight that you have with people in this province where you tie one hand behind their back and then you pick a fight.

The quote from the member is this, and it's talking about the pay cut. They've got this notion in here, and I'm going to talk about it because it's really important, that by penalizing cabinet ministers money, that's going to prevent them from bringing in a deficit. I'm going to come back to that point in a moment.

The member said, "Perhaps they," meaning NDP cabinet ministers, of which I was one at the time, "would even have called the election a year earlier because if you were a minister in that government, with this legislation," meaning his, "by calling the election a year earlier, if you were re-elected, even though you came back as a regular member, you would have got a pay increase if you were in cabinet."

I have to confess I thought you said something different when I first read it, and I've read it about five times since and now I'm not really sure what you said in there. But it seemed to me you were making the argument that because your great penalties were going to kick in, that even if you came back as a regular member, you'd be getting more money because you'd be reinstated to a full MPP's wages.

I just want to bring to your attention that I would think you would know, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance and a lawyer, that all the references inside this legislation—page 18 of the bill, under schedule B, subsection 3(1), talks about "This section applies if the province has a deficit," and then it goes on to talk about the salary of each executive member. The definition of "salary," when you look under subsection (11), says, "'salary' means the salary payable to a member of the executive council under section 3 of the Executive Council Act," and if you check that, they were talking about the extra that cabinet ministers get, not your regular MPP wages.

So you're not saying, as you've done to a whole lot of other public servants in terms of, "Your whole job is on the line and your ability to survive is on the line," which you've done to tens of thousands of people and think you've done something heroic in the process—this is merely the add-on that ministers get.

Anybody who has ever served as a minister will appreciate that by virtue of one phone call, you go from the backbench to the front bench. I happened to be in Sault Ste Marie, your hometown, Speaker, when I received a phone call that I was going into the ministry that Mr Sampson is now the minister of. In a blink I went from the backbench into cabinet.

I want to say to you, Speaker, and I say this to the couple of other ministers here in the House—and there's a certain former Minister of Municipal Affairs you can ask—that in that same blink you go out, sometimes through your own fault, sometimes just through circumstances. But it happens that fast.

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No one would be stupid enough to build their whole quality of life around the increase they've suddenly got as a cabinet minister, knowing that it could be gone in a blink. You'd have to be pretty foolish to do that, given that it could be gone in a blink. So it's used as discretionary income and set aside for things that you can put a halt to if you get one of those bad phone calls.

With that in mind, to use as a threat the idea that you're going to take away a portion of it, to me is not a big deal. But what worries me more than anything is the government's belief that ministers care so much about their extra pay that they would be prepared to cut health care, to cut education, to cut social services for the most vulnerable, rather than see their own pay cut, because that's the psychology here. That really worries me, because I've always believed that a minister, regardless of their political stripe, when they become a cabinet minister, their primary responsibility is the area of people's lives and of our society's lives and our communities' lives. That's what you are responsible for.

I'm going to tell you, I believe that about every cabinet minister until I know differently; that when someone becomes the Minister of Health, the health of the people of Ontario is their most important concern, not whether a decision they make is going to mean they get a \$5,000 or \$10,000 cut in their pay. It terrifies me that you guys, and most of you are guys, that you ministers are so concerned about your pay that you believe that the threat of taking some of it away is going to be enough for you to do what you argue people ought to do in the best interests of the people in terms of managing the people's money. That worries me.

I'm quite serious. That is a real departure from the psychology that most cabinet ministers live in. I think it's just because they think it will apply well and play well in politics—

Hon Mr Klees: Mr Speaker, I have no choice but to rise on this point of order: Under standing order 23, I refer you to items (h) and (i). It states very clearly that it would be improper for a member to "Make allegations against another member," or "Impute false or unavowed motives to another member."

It's very clear from the debate I've been following that the honourable member is suggesting that ministers in this House would in fact take action relative to their

portfolios because they're more interested in their own personal lives, their financial security, than they would be of the people they're serving. I suggest to you that that is imputing false motive to the members here and I would ask that the member withdraw that statement and refrain from that line of debate.

The Acting Speaker: I did not hear the member imputing motive and I don't find anything he is saying out of order.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. Moving on, I want to talk a little bit more about this 5%, because one of the things the government will say is that they've got sort of a fail-safe here, that if revenue year over year falls by 5% or more, then the law doesn't kick in. The difficulty I have with that is that in modern times it only happened one year that we had a year-over-year reduction in revenues by 5% or more. That was in 1992, during one of the deepest parts of the worst recession since the Dirty Thirties. Now, there's also a little bit of a surplus fund that they can generate over a period of time. In the case of our budget if it was, say, a couple of hundred million dollars—and I'm not saying that's small money, but relative to tens of billions—if you've got that money in a stabilization fund, you can use that to offset it so you're not going into this default. Remember, all of this is to prevent those cabinet ministers from having that precious pay cut.

What I worry about is, what happens between, say, 1% and 4.9%? If you follow this the way they say it's going to work, that it guarantees—and if I have enough time, I'm going to make the argument it doesn't do that. But I worry about what happens if they decide to follow the letter of this thing when we hit 4.5% or 4.9%. Again, having had the benefit of sitting in cabinet and being responsible for a budget of \$1.2 billion, over 15,000 employees at the time—it was the largest provincial ministry in Canada—I have a sense of what happens when you have a reduction of your overall revenue by 4.5% and what that means to line ministers. A 4.5% reduction in revenue, year over year, believe me, is like about a 9.8 earthquake on the Richter scale.

According to this government, if they decide to follow the letter of the law, all those billions immediately get chopped from health, education, social services—because those are the big-ticket ministries—corrections. They'll have to chop. And you know what? It doesn't matter if it's a good idea; it doesn't matter if it's going to hurt the health of the people; it doesn't matter if it's going to hurt the education of our kids. None of that matters because, "Oh God, some of my cabinet pay might get cut." That's a lot more important.

"It's a lot more important to protect my pay, or at the very least, it's more important for me to follow the Holy Grail of Mike Harris that says 'Thou shalt not run a deficit, no matter what, unless you get an over 5% reduction.'"

That's the reality, and that's why some of the people and entities that I referred to earlier in my remarks are worried about it; not because this is some kind of wacko,

left-wing perspective on things. You can't make that argument when you look at who else is opposed to it. There's a concern that what it means is indiscriminate cutting and slashing of budgets and programs that benefit, by and large, the middle class—and the poor too, but in terms of raw numbers it's the middle class. They're the ones that get hit the hardest. It doesn't hurt the very, very wealthy, because they can withstand this sort of thing. Besides, they already picked up God knows how many tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars from Mike Harris's tax cut, so they're already laughing. It's everybody else that needs those public services.

Speaker, I know you as an individual and I know how you feel about your children, and I can think of an awful lot of other fathers, myself included, who would be sickened that education would be cut. In Hamilton, there's already not enough money to put all the kids in school who have special needs, because they can't afford to hire enough educational assistants. Those that are in school aren't getting the same supports that they got in the past, so the kids aren't getting the same education.

You tell me that's going to continue or that's going to grow or that some of the pages that are sitting here now today—and I saw some of you with your folks earlier. If your education is going to get cut just because one of these ministers doesn't want to get a pay cut in his special, precious cabinet minister's fee, that is disgusting. Yet that's exactly what's going on.

A couple points more in the last few moments I have.

I have argued that if they decide to follow the letter of the law—I want to point out that at the end of the day there are so many ways to get around this thing. There were studies done in the States by the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the economist was named Irene Rubin. She outlines a whole number of examples, in fact gimmicks, that allow governments to get around this kinds of legislation because of the very dilemma that I've described here today.

1630

What's interesting—and I'm running out of time so I'll only mention a few—is that one of the gimmicks that economist Irene Rubin identifies is off-budget accounting, so we'll be keeping a close eye on the government's ideas of private-public partnerships. I'm not saying that in and of themselves that's a horrible thing, but it's how you do it. It's like everything; it's how you implement it, what your policies are. We'll be watching closely to see how much they may be trying to get some stuff off-book.

Delayed expenditures, changing from modified accrual to cash-basis accounting, internal borrowing and, get this one, using one-time revenue. They've already got their finger caught in the cookie jar once on that. How about Highway 407? Did you see what they did with the money from that? Did they put it back into transportation? No. Did they put it back into public transit? No. Did they put it anywhere else that would definitely benefit people who were benefiting from that highway? No. They put it into general revenue so that the budget numbers they used when they called an election a few

short months later would look better than they otherwise would. That's exactly one of the gimmicks here. Hell, Speaker, that's before they even passed this balanced budget legislation nonsense.

What did they also do? Some of the revenue measures. Again, the National Conference of State Legislatures, in their report: reducing tax allocations to local government. What member here doesn't know the damage that's been done to local government because of the cuts in transfer payments that this government made in order to pay for their tax cut, which they had to borrow, by the way?

I meant to mention earlier, when we talk about balanced budgets, if this government hadn't been so, let's say—I'm not going to say that. I can't say that. You'll rule me out of order. Let's just say that they've been very pigheaded about the idea that their tax cuts are going in no matter what. The reality is that, had we been re-elected—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I know. That's why I started the way I did. But had we been re-elected, the budget would have been balanced by now. Why? Because we didn't give \$6 billion a year in revenue back to the very wealthy of this province, so the balanced budget already would have been in place. When we talk about what this government will do and what lengths they'll go to to make their books look good, go talk to municipal councillors, aldermen and mayors about what decisions they've had to make in terms of raising user fees, in terms of closing access to libraries and recreation centres. That's happening in my community. I believe it's happening everywhere else in Ontario.

I'm following on the list: Authorizing tax amnesty programs, raising or imposing fees. Remember Mike Harris with his famous, "A copayment is a tax," and "A tax is a tax is a tax"? He got into power and he started raising copayments, and when we held him to it he said, "Oh no, that's not a tax." But when he was over here, where we are now, he said, "No, a copayment is a tax." When he became the Premier, a copayment wasn't a tax. So he's already used this strategy.

Increasing excise taxes. You will notice that the tobacco tax is not one of the ones affected by the balanced budget. Why? Because they've already cut a deal with the feds. They're going to be raising the price of cigarettes, so they don't want to handcuff themselves before they even get a chance to follow through the deal they've cut.

Extending temporary taxes to schedule—one to keep an eye on: broadening the basis of major taxes. You just change the definition of an existing tax and what it applies to and suddenly you can create a whole lot of revenue. So we'll be watching that too, because at some point this miracle economic boom—I'm glad it's there, don't get me wrong—that we're in is going to falter, and when it does, this piece of legislation is going to come up and bite you right where you don't want to be bitten. What it means for us in terms of the services we care about is that they are going to be cut.

Very quickly, in the two minutes I have left, this is real cute. I think this is why some people are saying it's smoke and mirrors and why really it doesn't matter, because the reality is—

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, so you agree.

Mr Christopherson: No, I said that if they followed the letter of this thing, all the other things I talked about earlier—I can give you a private tutorial later if you want, John.

Hon Mr Sampson: He needs all the help he can get.

Mr Christopherson: It sounds like it.

Schedule A, subsection 5(1): "A referendum is not required for the purposes of section 2"—that's if you want to raise taxes—and then it lists four reasons. One of them is if "The increase or new tax is not designed to generate a net increase in the total amount of provincial revenues and revenue raised for school purposes under the Education Act."

It talks about "generate a net increase." Again, I'm glad my friend from Wentworth-Burlington is here because he, like myself, remembers very clearly the pinkie swear.

Remember the pinkie swear? That was the one where somebody said, "Premier, in terms of this revenue-neutral deal you're going to work out with the municipalities, you're going to make sure we don't get more services dumped on us than cash in terms of the exchange?" And what was the Premier's answer? The Premier's response was, "Pinkie swear," and he did a little pinkie swear. Well, let me tell you, he sure left the impression that pinkie swears meant a lot, but they don't. Because it wasn't revenue-neutral, and the now parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, to his credit, voted against your legislation because it wasn't revenue-neutral.

So I worry when it starts talking about definitions of revenues and what's a net increase and what isn't when it's going to be your government that decides it.

Then, one of the clauses where you don't have to do a referendum is, "The increase or the new tax is required as a result of the reorganization or restructuring of one or more crown agencies." Lots of that kind of stuff—privatization. We're going to be watching very closely to see what kind of money's getting moved around there, because that's another way for you to get around your own legislation.

But this is probably the one I like the best. This is, "A referendum question must be clear, concise and impartial in its wording and must be capable of being answered in the affirmative or the negative." Then it says, "The wording of a referendum question is not reviewable by any court or tribunal for the purpose of determining whether the question complies with section 6." Guess who gets to make that decision without having any opportunity to have anyone take it to court or a tribunal? The government themselves. What wonderful legislative magic.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to address the Legislature today.

The Acting Speaker: Just before we go to questions and comments, I'd like to tell the members that in the west gallery there's a former member, Anthony Perruzza from Downsview, a member from the 35th Parliament.

Questions and comments?

Mr Hastings: I'd like to respond to the member for Hamilton West and his remarks, some of them rather incisive but really what I'd call a *cri de coeur*, a cry of the heart for the old nostalgic days of spending and taxing. It's based directly on the old model of what you'd call Keynesian economic thinking, which has been characterized through our universities, our education system, our political elites for the last 70 years. Yet here we are as we move into the 21st century and across the way the member for Hamilton West still espouses a system of economic thinking that utterly fails working class people today.

All you have to do is read what is happening in the real world, folks, and that is with regard to Robert Mundell, who is the new economic guru, if you want, the prizewinner of the economic Nobel prize in Sweden on December 10. I want to note one phrase. In an interview recently, in fact last Sunday, October 31, with Michael Enright on CBC Radio, he was quoted as saying: "The issue to me is that if we want to make the pie bigger, the way to do that is to have an efficient tax system. Any tax system, once it gets above the 30%, just involves too many people in avoiding it or evading it illegally and it becomes counterproductive. It inhibits growth and therefore reduces future tax revenues."

That's what this specific piece of legislation is designed to accommodate: greater tax increases for the very things that he's concerned about in health care and education.

Mr Gerretsen: The first thing I would like to say is that we in Kingston are very proud of Robert Mundell, who was raised and brought up in the Kingston area. We're indeed proud of our Nobel prizewinner.

It's always very interesting to listen to the member for Hamilton West, Mr Christopherson, because he always speaks with passion and with commitment and he's always a joy to listen to. But he—

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: Actually, it's better now that he's a little bit farther away because my ears can stand it a little bit better than before.

In any event, he himself put his finger right on it when he basically said that this piece of legislation is smoke and mirrors. There are so many exceptions and exemptions to it that you wonder what we've got left here. I believe he said that since the 1930s there has been one year—I believe he said 1992—when in actual fact the revenues of the province dropped by more than 5%. That basically means that for the other—what are we talking about?—60 or 70 years, this legislation never would have been in force or would have been needed or anything like that.

1640

There are a number of other exemptions as well. I know it's smoke and mirrors, I think the general public

knows it's smoke and mirrors, but at the same time, we also have to recognize that the people out there have had it with tax increases. There's no question about it. I agree with that. They have had it with tax increases. My main argument with the government has always been the fact that they were decreasing taxes when we still didn't have a balanced budget, and they're still doing it even today. We're one of the last provinces in Canada, Mr Speaker, as you well know, that still doesn't have a balanced budget.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the member for Hamilton West and to applaud the work he has done in exposing some of the frailties, if I can use that word, of this legislation.

I have to say that the point he made with respect to the fact that there was only one year in modern history in which revenues dropped below 5% means in fact, contrary to what the member for Kingston and the Islands just said, that there would only be one year in which the exemption from this would apply, so it's the exact opposite of the understanding of the member for Kingston and the Islands. Unfortunately, that may be why they're supporting this legislation. I don't know. I heard him say it's smoke and mirrors, and yet they're supporting it.

I want to talk, though, and stress the point the member for Hamilton West made, about the issues of lack of accountability. How odd that in a piece of legislation the government purports to be so democratic, to be going out and having referendums, and yet the referendum, as it's set out, when it's not required—and the member for Hamilton West ably set out those sections—if the minister determines that it's not required, he is then required to file a statement and give the reasons. It says in here that the minister's statement is for all purposes conclusive evidence of the matters addressed in it. The minister's statement is not reviewable by any court or tribunal.

So not only does the government, Lieutenant Governor in Council, the government cabinet, get to decide the question, the government gets to decide if it's clear, and no one can review that in court. The government gets to decide if the terms and conditions of exempting from a referendum apply. The minister's statement is evidence of that; it's not reviewable in court.

For a piece of legislation that purports to be about giving democratic control to the people of Ontario, I have to say the member for Hamilton West is absolutely right: It's a sham; it's smoke and mirrors.

Mr Skarica: I want to congratulate the member for Hamilton West for his usual eloquence and passion. I find it interesting that he criticizes me for blaming overspending on others and not having this government take any of the blame. If that's the case with me, I have to say that if you had to put a phrase on him, he's an apologist for overspending by other governments and other government agencies, both inside of Hamilton and outside.

For example, he indicated that the NDP had massive deficits, and he's right. When they took over, the total debt of the province was about \$40 billion, and they more than doubled it, by \$47 billion. He said, "It's not the NDP's fault; it's because there was a recession." He mentioned a whole bunch of other jurisdictions, except one. Which one didn't he mention? The current BC government, which is an NDP government. It is the only government in Canada right now, in prosperous economic times, that is having a rising deficit, but you don't even know what the deficit is. According to the NDP government, it's going from \$544 million to \$890 million. According to the Liberals, it's \$1 billion to \$3.4 billion but definitely rising.

Let's talk about Hamilton, because he did mention that, the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp. I would have thought he would have joined with me in a press release a year ago when they projected a deficit of \$20 million and it ballooned to \$40 million in three months, but that didn't seem to concern him. I suggested there should be an operational review. He's saying they're spending it all on health care for Hamiltonians. The fact of the matter is that they're not. They have eight vice-presidents making over \$150,000, a budget 10 times as large as Stelco with fewer vice-presidents. If you go to Hamilton, they have a bus with a mural on it paid for by Health Sciences. But that's OK with the member.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Further questions and comments.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I don't usually spend my time being critical of the third party in the House, because I always feel the enemy is on the other side, but I have to take exception. I was watching the member list a number of changes in policy, and I was thinking of the NDP over the years. They were so committed to public auto insurance, and I really thought they were going to bring in public auto insurance. Lo and behold, they abandon it. Then there was the sanctimony, I'll call it, the sacredness, of the collective agreement in labour. They broke that by imposing the social contract. I couldn't believe that. I know they wanted to abolish tuition for colleges and universities but instead increased it. I know there were huge cuts made in ministry budgets over the years with that government in power. I know they were opposed to privatization, and yet Highway 407 was privatized.

The Speaker: Order. I made a mistake in the count. There had already been the members in the rotation.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Yes. There were four, I believe. It did come.

Mr Bradley: Is the member cutting me off because of what I was saying?

The Speaker: No.

Mr Bradley: Mr Speaker, do I have unanimous consent of the House?

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

I will say that I thought that was the order. The member got up with such authority that I thought he was actually right. I should know better. But there was the count.

Response?

Mr Christopherson: To the previous member, I was really sort of looking the other way until I heard what you were saying, and then a quick count showed me—we all want to follow the rules here, you know, Jim.

The member from Etobicoke North talks about getting in the real world. I just remind him that in the real world, in modern-day economics, the reality is that it was the NDP government of Saskatchewan that was the first to balance their budget; it wasn't a Tory government, it wasn't a Liberal government. They, by the way, I would remind you, had a huge mess to clean up from the previous Tories, some of whom, as you know, are still in jail over corruption charges. So that's the real world too, with respect to my colleague.

To the member for Kingston and the Islands, you're right, I do believe that part of this is smoke and mirrors. I'll tell you what I worry about more than anything though is that the government will use the letter of this as a shield to continue or to start the kind of cutting that they'd like to, in the absence of which they would have trouble defending. That's what worries me the most about the kind of wording here, although I agree with him, based on the arguments and comments of my colleague from Beaches-East York, that when you pass a piece of legislation that says, "These are the rules, and oh, by the way, we set those rules, and oh, by the way, you can't take them anywhere to have my rulings questioned," you're not exactly conducting and operating an open government or offering up a fair process, in my humble opinion.

To the member from Wentworth-Burlington: First of all, I would never stand anywhere and say that we didn't make any mistakes. Of course we did, obviously we did. But the fact remains that what we were doing and the situation we were in was not out of step with what was happening in other industrialized segments of the world, and I continue to be disappointed that you don't support our broader community more. We need you on side, and you're not there for us.

The Speaker: Before further debate, pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Kenora-Rainy River has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer given today by the Minister of Finance to the question concerning hockey arena financing. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Minister of Finance wasn't here today.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. It was actually given yesterday and is being debated today. I apologize for that. The member has given notice, and this matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

Further debate?

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): I wish to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the Minister of the Environment today.

Mr Speaker, I also offer my congratulations on your election to the Chair. However, based on the reputation of this House for a certain kind of turbulence at times, perhaps I should be offering you my condolences. I am confident, though, that you will have the strength and wisdom to protect the sanctity and decorum of this House throughout your tenure, and I wish you luck in so doing.

1650

This is, of course, my maiden speech to the Legislature. Like my 102 colleagues here in the House, I certainly would not be delivering this address today were it not for the support of so many people in my riding. I want to take this opportunity to thank the thousands of people in my riding who marked a little X on a little slip of paper and dropped it in that little box. Through that simple act, these thousands of people spoke in unison and selected me to be their representative here. I am glad for this chance to thank them and to pledge to them that I will do my very best to validate the trust they have put in me, and in this government for a second time.

I am serious in that promise. I am proud to be the first-ever MPP from the newly created riding of Stoney Creek. My riding includes the municipalities of Glanbrook, Grimsby and Stoney Creek, as well as the eastern-most parts of Hamilton, but my riding also includes many smaller communities that I'm proud to represent: Mount Hope, Glanford, Binbrook, Woodburn, Fruitland, Vine-mont, Grassie, and of course, Winona.

I look forward to building on the legacy of the MPPs who represented these communities before me. In particular, as is traditional in a member's maiden speech, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my immediate predecessor in this House, the last ever member for Wentworth East, and that would be a former Speaker of this House, Mr Ed Doyle. As an MPP, Ed was a real statesman, never one to be divisive or antagonistic, and naturally that made him the most popular guy in the House. Ed remains a kind and compassionate person who wanted to do his part to help get Ontario back on the right track, for the sake of our children and that of his own grandchildren, whom I know he loves very dearly. Having accomplished what he set out to do, Ed stood down in the election, allowing me to step forward and take my place here. I'm sure all of us here want to wish Ed the very best in his retirement.

I chose the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act as the occasion to deliver my first address to the House because it defines quite succinctly some of the core beliefs espoused in my own campaign and in the platform of my party.

First and foremost, this bill is about accountability. It enshrines in law the fact that the government of Ontario will never again be able to increase taxes on its citizens at will. It enshrines in law the fact that the government of Ontario must first ask the people of Ontario for their assent to increase taxes and provide the justification for

so asking, and it enshrines in law the fact that the government of Ontario will always be required to balance its budget, live within its means and send deficits in Ontario the way of the dodo bird. It's all about accountability.

For many years, the people of Ontario cried foul over spiralling taxes and uncontrolled spending. From 1985 to 1995, in the 10 years known as the lost decade, Liberal and NDP governments hit the taxpayers of Ontario with 65 different provincial tax increases. All of them were implemented without voter approval. Interestingly enough, if you look through the Liberal and NDP platforms at the time, there is not one reference of any intention or consideration to raise taxes, yet during the lost decade, taxes increased exponentially once these parties got their hands on the levers of power.

As one anonymous philosopher once put it, "Death and taxes will always be with us, but at least death doesn't get any worse."

How can it be that a democratically elected government can raise taxes and spend money it doesn't have without answering to the people? How can it be that a government can pretend it doesn't need to justify its actions when it flies in the face of the democratic will? How can it be that a government can choose to do whatever it wants between those constitutionally mandated trips to the ballot box once every four years? This legislation goes a long way to alleviating those concerns. They are concerns that have come about by something that I want to focus on for a moment.

There is a tangible gap between a bare-bones democracy, where citizen participation is stifled, and a flourishing democracy in which input from the community is not only sought out but also expected. This gap increasingly separates elected representatives from the very people who elected them. For many years, I have referred to this gap as the democratic deficit. It's a deficit just as real and as important to address as fiscal deficits.

I believe that the democratic deficit has increased over many years as a direct result of a woefully inadequate system of accountability at all levels of government. Real political accountability has been restricted to those constitutionally mandated elections, whereas elections should be the final accountability test. To achieve a successful, effective and more accountable democratic government, we must recognize the need to develop the means for legitimate public participation in the governing process.

This reminds me of one of the most incredible scenes I have ever witnessed in my community. A few years back, I watched a municipal politician stand up at a public meeting and profess, on a very controversial issue, that he heard and he knew what the people wanted. He could feel it in his heart. He could even taste it. But regardless of that, he was going to turn around and do what he thought was right, and that meant voting against the wishes of the people on the matter. In essence, this politician acknowledged the democratic will of the people and then stated that he had no choice but to vote

against it. Incredibly, he actually expected accolades for his decision to ignore the people and do as he pleased.

The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act is the first step in restoring accountability to our political system. It begins to reverse the trend, which has built up under governments of every political stripe in this province, of taking real power away from citizens and leaving them with no recourse until election time.

This act begins the process of empowering citizens, giving them the opportunity on a regular basis to have a real say on issues like taxation. This makes democracy an ongoing process, and not an obligation once every four years, as far too many people see it now. If this legislation can get more people to pay attention to the workings of government by giving them more power to make decisions more often, then I see no reason why it should not pass.

The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act will ensure that all future governments will have to seek voter approval if they ever begin to feel the temptation of taxation. Voter approval will have to be obtained through a binding referendum in which the people consent to pay a higher personal income tax, corporate tax, retail sales tax, employer health tax, gas tax, fuel tax or education property tax, among others.

Of course, if you were to ask just about every living person in Ontario today if they wanted to pay higher taxes, the resounding chorus of no's would probably echo from one end of the continent to the other. That's why the referendum is the key here. The referendum allows the government to take its case before the people, just like an election campaign but centred around the one issue of potential tax increases. The government would be compelled to provide justification for its proposed tax hikes, and the people could then decide for themselves if this proposal made any sense. This is what democracy is supposed to be about.

In terms of the budget-making process, this legislation would ensure that future governments will never again run up the kinds of staggering deficits bequeathed to us by the Liberal and NDP governments of the last decade. By enacting this bill, Ontario will have to balance its budget each and every fiscal year. This government's legislation is similar to laws in the provinces of Alberta and Manitoba. However, this legislation will have the highest penalties for budgetary mismanagement. These penalties make Ontario's legislation tougher than any other taxpayer protection legislation in the country.

If the penalties seem harsh, let's not forget that about a century ago public office was a voluntary vocation. At that time, politicians in this province were not paid a salary. Holding public office was considered a calling, a sacrifice that politicians made for the betterment of their constituents. In the present day, docking the pay of politicians who are unable to run a sound and balanced government is entirely fair, and I'm sure the people of Ontario would not disagree.

Before I give my remaining time to the Minister of the Environment, I wish to reiterate something I mentioned

earlier. I was proud and honoured that the voters of Stoney Creek chose me as their representative. I give them my thanks and my pledge of service, and I look forward to working with all members of this House to build a better Ontario.

1700

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It's my privilege and pleasure to follow the honourable member for Stoney Creek on his excellent maiden speech. We are all very glad on this side of the House to have him as our colleague and a member of the Legislature.

I also appreciate the opportunity to discuss this important policy issue. This is a safety bill. If the Premier had not introduced it, maybe our Solicitor General or Attorney General would have introduced it. This is a bill that is going to keep Ontarians safe from future tax hikes and from out-of-control government spending. This is a safety bill.

On behalf of the Mike Harris government, I wish to also acknowledge my involvement in the lead-up to this bill on the issue of direct democracy and taxpayer protection. I was at the time the Premier's parliamentary assistant, and I testified before the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly with regard to referendums and whether or not Ontario should join the rest of Canada to move our democracy forward.

I wanted to present a time line to this House on the commitment to taxpayer protection and how this is an important step forward. I would like to remind honourable members that promoting taxpayer protection has been part of Mike Harris's agenda from the very beginning. Our Premier signed the taxpayer protection pledge initially in 1995, and promised a 30% personal income tax cut for all Ontarians. Of course, we delivered on that; we did what we said we would do.

In August 1996, our government released a consultation and discussion paper on the use of referendums in Ontario. It was entitled *Your Ontario, Your Choice*. The goal was to place taxpayers, indeed all Ontarians, back in control of their government. I believe that referendums offer people increased government accountability and they improve public participation, and therefore improve the legitimacy and credibility of the public policy decisions that are made here in Ontario.

In September of that year, the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly held public hearings on our discussion paper. We heard from many experts, including my good friend and a former MP of inestimable character, Patrick Boyer. We heard from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, we heard from Democracy Watch, and we heard from many others. The committee tabled its report in July 1997. Part of the committee's recommendations was to implement a taxpayer protection and balanced budget act, and of course we're seeing the fruits of that labour here today.

In April 1998, I also began a series of town hall meetings that took me across the province. I travelled to Ottawa, Nepean, Windsor, Chatham, Leamington, Ham-

Ilton, Burlington, Kitchener, London, St Catharines, Niagara Falls, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Elliot Lake, Port Hope, Uxbridge, Oshawa, Vaughan and Kingston. To top off this province-wide consultation tour, I participated in electronic town hall on CityTV, starring Colin Vaughan. We heard from the people of Ontario how important they believe it is to prevent future governments from imperiling their financial situation.

Now we are moving forward with taxpayer protection. We are committed to ensuring that Ontarians are protected from whimsical spending that gave us an \$11-billion deficit and a \$100-billion-plus debt. With this act, I believe and we believe that government accountability for taxes and a balanced budget will be assured.

This is important for another reason as well. Ontario—Mr Speaker, you might be interested to know this—is one of only two provinces with no referendum law at all. For the record, the other province is Nova Scotia. Every other province and territory has some type of referendum legislation in place.

I want to talk about a couple of them, specifically Alberta and Manitoba. They have taxpayer protection acts already in place. Under Alberta's laws, no sales tax can be implemented and no increase in the personal income tax rate could happen without prior public approval in a referendum. Manitoba's rules specify that any increase in certain taxes must be approved in a referendum before being put to the Legislature.

In British Columbia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, any topic may be put to the public in a referendum. Different rules but the same principles apply in Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and Yukon. I don't know about Nunavut; I'll get back to you on that point.

I want to make this point clear: Referendums are part of the history and tradition of Canada. This is not some foreign, alien element to our parliamentary tradition; it is part of the history of Canada. In school we all learned about the referendums relating to conscription. We of course lived through the referendum on the Charlottetown accord in 1992, and we all learned about local referendums on temperance, fluoridation of water, boundaries for municipalities. All those are part of our traditions as members of a public in Canada and Ontario that have seen referendums over many decades.

Of course, we have examples from all over the world. Tony Blair, Prime Minister of Britain—Britain is the cradle of our parliamentary democracy—has initiated three referendums to date, and there are apparently more coming on such issues as the accession to the euro in the future. So this is not something alien to parliamentary tradition.

I wanted to talk a little bit about some of the examples, because the member for Hamilton West was concerned about some of the examples in other jurisdictions in North America, specifically US states. I have some results that occurred in November 1998 in the United States, and I wanted to assure him that basically the people get it right. It doesn't mean that the right-wingers

win every referendum or the left-wingers win every referendum. The people have an internal common sense approach to these issues.

I wanted to tell the honourable member for Hamilton West about some of the results in the United States that recently occurred. I want to tell him that trade unions did especially nicely. In June 1998, in California of all places—he was concerned about California—they pulled off a surprising victory against a Californian measure that would have impeded their freedom to extract political dues from members. Some environmental referendums also occurred in the United States in 1998. Four out of seven initiatives proposed by environmentalists passed, and most interestingly, the animal rights activists scored four out of six protecting horses from butchers in California and bears from baiters in Missouri, as well as ending cockfights in Missouri and Arizona.

Finally, let's get to some of the tax referendums, because the United States has more experience with tax referendums than we have. Very interestingly, the tax referendums were mixed. The tax-cutting wing of the Republican Party suffered some setbacks. Of seven anti-tax referendums, only three passed, two of them in Montana. The only real boost to tax-cutters came in Massachusetts, where a proposal to cut state income tax passed by 82%. So that one I guess was a no-brainer for the citizens of Massachusetts.

I wanted to assure the honourable members that people have an internal gyroscope on these things. It's not automatic that a tax cut will pass; it's not automatic that a tax hike will fail. The people know best what is appropriate in their particular circumstances. That's the experience, not only in Canada but the USA and throughout Europe as well, where referendums are occurring. Of course, we're all watching with great interest what will happen in Australia with their referendum on the future of the monarchy. Referendums are part of a democratic and parliamentary tradition, and they have occurred time and again.

In conclusion, our government knows how important lower taxes are to improving our economy, making Ontario a better place to live, to work, to raise our families. We understand the difference between 66 tax hikes from 1985 to 1995 and our record of 99 tax cuts so far. Our act, the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, will protect Ontarians from capricious governments who seek only to increase their revenue and not to look out for the interests of the people they purport to represent. Our government will continue to cut taxes. We will continue to improve the economy, and at the same time leave a balanced budget for our children. This new law, if passed, will ensure that all future governments leave exactly the same legacy.

The Speaker: Questions and comments.

1710

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): First, I want to congratulate the member for Stoney Creek for his introductory remarks. I wish him well in his tenure as the member representing Stoney Creek.

I just wanted to raise a couple of questions. When Mike Harris was in opposition, he made a statement one day in the House and was critical of the then NDP government because of the huge deficits they had run up. He said in the House at the time, "The Conservative government has never run a deficit, we never will, and you people just don't know what you're doing."

I sat there and thought: "That can't possibly be right. It sounded right, because he said it, but it couldn't possibly be right." So I went back and I checked on it, and I found that the last time there was a balanced budget in Ontario was in 1967.

Interjections.

Mr Kwinter: No, no, just hold on a second. This is a Conservative.

Interjection.

Mr Kwinter: Sorry, 1969.

I went into the library and got all the numbers, and I sent it over to Mike the next day. He said, "I had no idea." It didn't stop him from saying it, but he said he had no idea that was the case. He just assumed there was always a balanced budget under a Conservative government.

The concern I have is that members opposite say things because they've heard it and they accept it as fact—the 10 lost years—the things they supposedly have done, this great economic probity under this government.

Would you take a look at what has happened. You had staggeringly windfall profits in casinos and from the LCBO that have allowed you to do things that you could never have done without them. You have borrowed money, you have sold off government assets. With all of that, even though you're getting close on the deficit—I sit on the economic and finance committee and I have for many years. We had said two years ago that if the government had the will they could have balanced the budget two years ago. They chose not to, because they had very serious needs for money. So what have they done? They're getting close on the deficit, but they certainly have allowed the debt to balloon.

When you take a look at the legislation—and we approve the concept of balanced budgets; it was in our platform in 1995, it's been in our platform in 1999—if you take a look at the wording, as long as you say in the election campaign that you're going to do things, it isn't covered. As long as you do a whole range of other things, these are weasel words. It sounds good, it makes good PR—

The Speaker: Order. Your time is up.

Ms Lankin: May I add my congratulations to the member from Stoney Creek for his introductory comments in this Legislature.

I found one aspect of his remarks particularly interesting, when he talked about, "Let's not only deal with fiscal deficits, but let's talk about"—I think he referred to it as a democracy deficit and accountability as the concept he was raising.

I'd like to interject a third deficit that I believe we as legislators and those who hold responsibility for services

to the public in Ontario should be concerned about, and that's the social deficit that governments can create as well. One of the things that concerns me about the nature of the legislation—I am in favour of moving to and getting to a balanced budget. In fact, if it hadn't been for the government's determination to proceed with income tax cuts in the way they did and to the extent they did, if the budget plans had been followed that were in place before the election of the Mike Harris government, the budget would be balanced by this point in time. We would be in a very different position in terms of decision-making with respect to either expenditure or with respect to debt reduction.

As you talk about fiscal deficits, as you talk about democracy deficits, you all fail to deal with issues of social deficits and environmental deficits that have been created under the term of office of your government.

The Minister of the Environment uses such amazing phrases as "capricious government" and "whimsical spending." I'm sorry—I very much like the member, and I know he has genuine interest in referendum—but the arrogance of those comments. When I sit here, as one of the first ministers of health ever to try to bring into control health spending in this province, to take it from double-digit increases to a point in time where we were reforming the system to make it responsible to the people but also deliver the services—you should have a referendum if you want to go around closing hospitals as well. That would be an appropriate balance.

Mr Skarica: Since the member from York Centre brought up the 10 lost years, I think I'd like to address what the 10 lost years really meant.

I understand the member for York Centre entered the Legislature in 1985, and at that time the total debt of the province of Ontario was \$30 billion. The Conservative government had been in power for 42 years and it was in fact in power for most of that 85 years, and the total debt for 85 years was \$30 billion.

Then the 10 lost years started and the Liberals increased the debt in very good times by \$10 billion, from \$30 billion to approximately \$40 billion. Then the NDP took over and thought, "Ten billion dollars is not very much. We're going to do that basically every year." So they did that, almost an average of \$10 billion a year, and they upped the debt by \$47 billion. So in the 10 lost years, the debt went up by \$57 billion, and if you take that off of the total debt of \$109 billion, you've got \$52 billion left over. So in 90 years, mostly of Conservative governments, there's approximately \$52 billion in debt. In the 10 lost years, you had \$57 billion of debt, for the members opposites.

Frankly, I think the public has to be very careful before relying on any figures from the Liberals. I found it very interesting that Mr Crozier, on November 2, page 313 in Hansard, talks about how the Liberal government, when it was in power, was responsible for \$5 billion. He was out by 100%; it was \$10 billion. Then he said the NDP was responsible for \$12 billion of debt. He was off by \$35 billion. I remember being in the House and

saying, "Well, you people are making a mistake." The member for the Liberals was off by almost \$30 billion or \$40 billion, but when you're a Liberal or an NDP, what's \$30 billion or \$40 billion?

Mr Bradley: I was awaiting the member from the Wentworth-Stoney Creek area to explain what happened at that nomination meeting where he went and voted for Chris Phillips, encouraged Chris Phillips to run for the Liberals, and then he turned around and ran for the Conservatives.

Now, I remember Ed Doyle. I'm glad he mentioned Ed Doyle, because what a wonderful member of Parliament Ed was. Ed was a man of integrity; Ed was a man of principle. I knew he was a Conservative, but I still admired him as a member of this Parliament and the way he conducted himself in that responsibility.

I find it interesting that the Conservatives get up to speak on matters fiscal and the Harris government has never had a AAA rating from the bond rating services. They can't get up to that AAA rating. The last time we had a AAA rating, I remind them, was when we had a Liberal government in Ontario. Now the rating's been way down, and the reason is that they kept borrowing money to give a tax cut. I know some members of this House—I won't mention their names because some of them are in the cabinet now and some may even sit in the Speaker's chair, who knows? But I know there were members of the Conservative caucus who wisely cautioned Mike Harris and the whiz kids not to have a tax cut until such time as the budget was balanced. That way the Conservatives wouldn't have added \$21 billion to the debt.

My friends in the chamber of commerce used to tell me, and the Reform Party people in my area: "You know, the debt is a real problem. We've got to address it." I agree, but this government is giving away more of its revenues now with further tax cuts, and that debt is going to continue to accumulate in this province instead of addressing that particular problem.

I certainly have found interesting the comments of my friends opposite and I hope they can answer that story about the AAA rating and not listening to people who advised them not to cut taxes before balancing the budget.

The Speaker: Response?

The member for Stoney Creek.

Mr Clark: I want to thank the members for Brampton West-Mississauga, York Centre, Beaches-East York, Wentworth-Burlington and St Catharines.

There was another very famous Conservative who had a short brush with insanity. Sir Winston Churchill also became a Liberal once, and he woke up too and came back to the Conservatives.

If you're talking about flip-flopping, I'd like to read this into the record. Advocating referendums on government issues is quite a turnaround for Mr McGuinty:

"There are flip-flops, and there are great thundering mammoth total about-face U-turn 180s that make your

head spin and your socks go up and down. This would be one of those." The Globe and Mail, May 14, 1999.

"Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal leader, jolted the campaign—and his party—with his backwards triple somersault endorsement of a binding referendum on tax increases. Tossing all his previous convictions overboard...." David Frum, the National Post, May 25, 1999.

"By the next election, Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty, who never supported taxpayer protection laws, stole the idea and promised if elected he'd introduce the laws in the first 100 days of government. What a joke. The Liberals, who along with the NDP hit Ontario taxpayers with 65 new or hiked taxes from 1985 to 1994, including raising personal income taxes 11 times as the deficit climbed to over \$100 billion, were promising taxpayer protection laws." Linda Leatherdale, Toronto Sun.

All independent, third-party people—very clearly the Liberals are the people who can't get their principles straight and they can't deal with the matter in terms of taxpayer protection.

We stand by our proposal and I will support it very forcefully.

1720

Mr Bradley: On a point of order, Speaker: I would like to ask unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for Stoney Creek to explain whether or not he went to the Liberal nomination meeting and voted for Chris Phillips and then double-crossed him and ran against him in the election campaign. I just want to ask that.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? No.
Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: I'm sure the people who are watching this today must think the election campaign is still going on. Maybe we should tell everybody in the House that the election is over. It's over, and for the next three and a half years the government and the opposition have to deal with the problems that face the people of Ontario.

I'll be sharing my time with the member for Davenport, the 20 minutes that we have this evening.

I would like to speak about one issue and one issue alone, and that deals with accountability. We've heard some of the other members talk about this as well, about the state of the finances of the province of Ontario. I know I've spoken about this in the previous Parliament, but I just want to speak about it again very shortly. This deals with the whole notion of, where are we in this province as far as our public debt and as far as the amount of money that we spend annually on servicing that public debt. Let's just review the figures.

A lot of figures have been thrown around here, but about these figures there can be no doubt at all. We are currently, according to the budget document itself, in debt in this province to the tune of \$115 billion. When this government took over four years ago it was \$90 billion. Look at your own documents. You've added \$25 billion to the public debt of this province. During the NDP years, as has already been mentioned, \$47 billion

was added to the public debt, and during the Liberal years, the five preceding years, there was \$10 billion. This basically means that during the previous 40 years of Conservative rule in this province, somewhere between \$35 billion and \$38 billion of public debt was racked up.

Just for the record, we've got a situation where over \$60 billion of public debt of this province has been racked up by the Conservatives and \$47 billion has been racked up by the New Democratic Party when they were in power—and they had tough times; I'll grant them that.

What does this really mean? What it really means is that what we are currently spending on the interest payments on the public debt in this province is some \$9.1 billion. Out of the roughly \$50-billion budget or total revenues this province takes in on an annual basis, \$9.1 billion is spent on interest payments, and that is during a period of time when the interest rates are relatively low. Can you imagine, if we still had interest rates to the tune of 10%, 12%, 13%, as we had during most of 1960s and 1970s and 1980s, what our interest payment would be? It would be much higher.

During the term that the Harris government has been in office, the interest cost has gone up from \$7.1 billion to \$9.1 billion annually. The one statistic that always fascinates people I speak to, when you hear that so much money is being expended on much-needed social services in this province by the provincial government, is that in actual fact we are spending a lot more on the interest costs on the public debt, some \$9.1 billion, than we do on all the provincially paid for social services in this province, an amount of \$7.9 billion. Most people find that astonishing, because they hear about all these much-needed support payments that go out to needy groups and needy individuals in our province, and yet that amount is less than we spend on the interest payments annually.

So what does all this mean? Are we in favour of tax cuts? Sure, who wouldn't like to pay less taxes? Everybody would love to pay less taxes. But the problem is that you cannot afford to cut taxes when you are still running a deficit on an annual basis. That's been my major disagreement, that's been our party's major disagreement with the government. If they had gone and balanced the budget and not decreased taxes, then, in effect, as has already been stated, we could have balanced the budget of the province some two years ago. But instead what we're doing is just adding on to the public debt. It is kind of like we haven't quite matched the expenditure side with the revenue side but we decide to lessen the revenue side of things anyway, therefore putting greater pressure on the system and on the services and therefore widening the gap between the rich and the poor out there, between the people who have enough, the people who can get on by themselves, and those who require good government services in order to exist and to live on a day-to-day basis.

It's interesting that there's one other aspect to it as well. This government likes to take so much credit for the fact that they have tried to balance the budget, and we're still not there. I think we're one of the last provinces to

do that. It's kind of interesting how the federal debate is going on right now as to how should they spend the extra amount of money. Should it be expended on tax cuts, should it be expended on paying down the public debt, should it be expended on much-needed programs? We haven't even reached that stage here. It's a rather nice debate to have. I think a balanced approach to that situation is preferable to the people of Ontario. You cannot have tax cuts without starting to pay something back on the public debt in this province and without putting some money back into the much-needed services in this province, because there are many people out there who are hurting.

I'm sure all of us have heard about these kinds of situations in our own constituency offices, of students who are disabled in one way or another, who used to have educational assistance and now, no matter what the minister says here, are cut off unilaterally from those kinds of services. It's happening in town after town and in system after system throughout this entire province.

Yes, when a dramatic situation is brought to the House, the minister can fix that and deal with that situation. But how about all those other people who have been cut off, who no longer have those services available for their disabled students etc, who aren't fortunate enough to get the minister's ear in that particular case? That's totally unfair.

There's been much merriment made today about the fact that the Liberals are supporting this piece of legislation. Quite frankly, one of the reasons we're supporting this is that the legislation is so weak that it's almost like how could anybody be against it. Even an NDP member today admitted that there's only one year in the last 60 or 70 years that the revenues of this province dropped by more than 5%, and that's when this legislation would cut in.

1730

I say to this government, we are getting close to balancing the budget. I guess it won't be next year because you've left yourself a very convenient out to the extent that this act won't go into operation till the year 2001. But once we get there, let's start looking at restoring some of the much-needed services out there for individuals.

I have to believe, and I think the vast majority of Ontarians believe, that good government programs play a role in our lives. They are the great equalizer between people, those who are fortunate to make it on their own and those who, for whatever reason, need a hand up. Before we start talking about tax cuts and all the other things, let's start taking a look at some of the major programs that are out there and see how those programs can be strengthened, with accountability. There may have been accountability problems in the past, no matter which government was in power, no matter which party was in power. There has to be accountability for the public money that's being expended by government. I'm totally in favour of that.

Let's not rush into this tax cut at all costs kind of mentality that we seem to be going towards. With that, I will now turn it over to the member for Davenport, Mr Ruprecht.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I appreciate the comments from the member for Kingston and the Islands. I'm delighted to be able to add my comments to the discussion of Bill 7.

I wanted to remind the members opposite first, is it not true that the Common Sense Revolution document of 1995 promised the people of Ontario a balanced budget in the first mandate? If that is correct, I think that right now we're in the second mandate. If I'm correct in terms of the figures I have in front of me say, this government has added \$23 billion to the province's debt.

First, there's the promise of a balanced budget. That hasn't taken place. My understanding is that we're still short roughly \$2.5 billion, give or take a few hundred thousand, a couple of million. The question really should be asked, why has it not been possible for the government to keep the promise? I'll tell you why it has not been possible, why the government was unable to keep that promise. It's simply because there was another promise made. That was a 30% tax reduction or tax cut.

On this side of the House we know who benefited most from this provincial tax cut. That's why the AAA rating that the member for St Catharines pointed out earlier was not able to be had, simply because of the tax cut. It would seem to me that the first item of business that the Harris government should've done was to reduce and to keep its promise to maintain a balanced budget.

The government further has, as I said earlier, added \$23 billion to the province's debt. Here we have in front of us Bill 7. We have the same government that produces this kind of legislation at the same time giving us a \$23-billion debt. To some minds on this side of the House, and certainly to some Ontarians, it's almost unconscionable that, first, they don't keep their promise and, second, they're sticking us with a \$23-billion debt.

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: I can understand why you might get excited about this, because you don't like to be reminded that you don't keep your promises. That's why, I would only hope that having made these promises, having made now a new promise of Bill 7, you might be able to keep this one at least.

Let me point out to you that this government has made a number of promises. This government has made a number of attempts to fix the tax revenue of this province. In fact, there were seven tax bills introduced—because they couldn't get it right the first time—to fix the problems they had created.

Mr Speaker, you may not be from Toronto but you know a lot about Toronto. When you go on our major streets, storeowners on Queen Street, Dufferin Street, some of the stores on Yonge Street, even storeowners from Rexdale were complaining. They were saying to us, "We are going bankrupt under the first attempt of this government in terms of fixing new taxes for the prov-

ince." They wanted to set the record right in terms of taxes for this province, and they would literally have driven thousands of mom-and-pop operators into bankruptcy, and you know that's true. That's why there was such a hue and cry out there, even in some strip malls, and those operators joined us. But along the major streets of Toronto, along St Clair especially, there were hundreds of people complaining and angry as hell because of the havoc the government had wreaked in trying to fix the taxes of this province.

Was this part of an operation that said, "We'll have to listen to the people"? Was this part of an operation that said, "Let democracy speak and let the majority win"? Was this part of a democracy that said, "Let's discuss this with each other. Let's have a few people from the business community sit down with us and work out a tax bill"? No. They rammed it through, and the consequence of ramming through these tax bills was a horrendous backlash by some of the business owners.

It was really terrible to see people on the street, and the only way they had to show they were unhappy, because a lot of them would have gone into bankruptcy, was to demonstrate, because they couldn't get access to the "whiz boys." They couldn't get access to these kids who made up these tax bills without the benefit of asking their own backbenchers in the government what the repercussions of these tax bills would be. There was no discussion of that. There was no reference to you in the back benches. There was no reference to the storeowners who had to pay the consequences of that attempt. No. It was the whiz kids who produced it, and that's why there was backpedalling seven times. If you have a government that backpedals seven times to try to get it right, you've got to ask a question about Bill 7.

Let's look at that very briefly. As I said earlier, our party will support this, because we had our own bill that we were going to introduce in the first 100 days of our first mandate. We would have done that within the first 100 days and not made that promise that it will be done in the first mandate and then go into the second mandate. But what I'm very much afraid of is that the repercussions of this legislation might be that there will be two kinds of health care systems, two tiers, one for the poor and one for the rich who can afford it. Right now, as you know, the province and the Minister of Finance are going through, looking at hospital budgets and, of course, some will be rejected by the ministry.

Secondly, there will also be two tiers in terms of education. I have made it my business to look at some of the tuition fees, not just the tuition fees we talk about—an increase of over 50% in the last five years—but also the tuition fees in private schools. Did you know that in one of the private schools right in Toronto, not very far from here, almost within walking distance, grade 9 would cost your child, if you want to enter that school and stay there, room and board plus education, \$28,000, and the school is full. That doesn't mean we've got a lot of money. It simply means there are a lot of foreign people, meaning foreigners abroad, who send their kids over to

Canada because they've got the money, because half of us wouldn't be able to pay for it. What we're saying is that what would happen here is very simple, that is, there are those who can afford it and there are those who are unable to afford it.

1740

The repercussions are going to be very firm. We already know that poor kids are going to have a very tough time entering university and paying the tuition fees. Simply said, poor kids are going to be unable to enter private schools. That, for sure, is an impossibility, simply because they can't make that \$28,000 and pay for those children's education. That won't be possible.

One more comment, and that is, what about all the repercussions to our environment? Are we going to have enough money to look after our environment? The environment, our rivers, our streams—fish don't speak, but you speak and you have to represent the environment as well. Is there going to be enough money over here? Is there going to be enough money to look after the environment? I say that may be one of the flaws.

My final point is the pay cut. Look at the pay cut. Let me just read this to you, because you might find this of interest. It says right here—Mr Speaker, I see that my time is up, and I thank you very much.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): It's my pleasure to comment on the speeches by the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Davenport.

I've got to tell you, I sat here in amazement listening to the member for Kingston and the Islands, because he said he was in favour of tax cuts. I've sat here since 1995. He was here in the 36th Parliament of Ontario and he voted against each and every tax cut. All of a sudden, today, on November 4, 1999, he's in favour of tax cuts. That's quite a flip-flop.

He also talked about the federal government and the massive surplus they have. I would encourage him to ask his federal cousins in Ottawa to cut taxes for hard-working families in Canada and also to reduce the EI premiums for employees and employers across Canada.

In the last Parliament, the Liberals used the word "draconian." That was the word they used last time. The word they learned this time, in this Parliament, is the word "arrogant." But the two words I would really like them to embrace are the words "tax cuts." They still don't seem to be getting it.

The member from Davenport talks about what he would have done in the first 100 days of office. When I think about it, I don't really think they would have done that much. They had a red book. It was soundly rejected by the people of Ontario in 1995, as their plan was in 1999. They would have brought forward a bill, their first bill, that would have protected the vested interests, the special interests in this province. It wouldn't have done anything. The bill would have protected the status quo in Ontario, and it would have been called the status quo protection act.

The Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I just compliment the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Davenport on their wonderful presentations, an account, truly, of what these two pieces of legislation rolled into one do not do. There is absolutely nothing that increases the accountability of the government or the elected members. It does not increase the democratic process of our Parliament. It does not increase the way the public can participate in the decision-making process. It does not do any of that.

As the two members have said very well, we do not need this type of legislation to deliver good government, and if we were to deliver good government, we wouldn't have to resort to this type of legislation. How often can we pull the wool over the voters' eyes? They know very well how dearly they are paying for the tax cuts they love so much.

The difference between us and them is that we would have done it in a very fair, compassionate way. First, we would have taken care of the children going hungry at school. We would have taken care of the homeless. We would have taken care of our retired people, the senior people. That's how we would have done it.

When the Premier in this House is saying, "We are going to do the same thing," the people are saying: "Hold on a second. We are already below the ground. How far do you want to take us?"

Let me ask the members and the Premier, why didn't you come up with this legislation, as you said, in 1995, after you were elected? They made those promises, but they didn't do it. They had to do all the dirty work, do all the cuts for the rich people and then bring us to where we are. I don't think it is very fair.

Mr Hastings: It's fascinating, as usual, to listen to the member for Kingston and the Islands, the member for Davenport and the member for York West recounting what it would have been like if they had had the opportunity to win in 1995.

Interjection.

Mr Hastings: What if. The "what if" is really that they would never, never, never allow a tax reduction of any type for as long as they lived. The very fundamental nature of the party opposite always is to make sure that whenever they collect dollars from the taxpayer, whether it's through the retail sales tax, through the corporate income tax, through the personal income tax, it's their determination to keep all that money. All you've got to do is look at their federal brethren in Ottawa to see why we need taxpayer protection.

Mr Martin, their finance guy, talks about a surplus. What that indicates clearly is over-taxation on the part of those folks in Ottawa. That's what you'd have here. That's what you had here in 1989-90, when they talk about their great lamented balanced budget in 1989-90. Do you know how they got it? Through 65 tax increases; one of the biggest was the concentration tax on land, a direct invasion of local taxation. But that was acceptable then. In other words, all these tax increases they talk about, the party of the tax increase is stupid and indis-

criminate and it has not helped working-class families for the last 45 years in this province. That's the difference between this government and that party over there of high taxers and big spenders.

Mr Bradley: Our members in the Liberal Party obviously didn't have a chance to mention the 567 tax increases this government has implemented since it has been in power. You say, "How do you get 567?" I have counted all of the user fees that you people have raised on the other side, and there are now 567 user fees which have been increased by this government. So, when they say they haven't increased taxes, well, they've cut taxes for the richest people in the province, but the poorer people, who have a tough time meeting the obligations of those fees that are imposed upon them, they're the ones who've felt the brunt of this government's fiscal policies.

Meanwhile, of course, this government has allowed the debt to accumulate, and I'm telling the chamber of commerce next time I see them, or the next Rotary Club meeting I'm going to, I'm telling them about all the debt that you people have accumulated and how now you don't want to pay it down.

The other thing I thought our members would mention is the lousy hours that banks have in this province. You just try to go to a bank after 4 o'clock in downtown Toronto and do any business with a human being. I know some of the people over there like—what do they call those machines?

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: ATMs. They like those ATMs, because what happens is that nobody has a job any more. You take all those jobs away from people, and the bank president is making more money, the bank executives in the bank making all kinds of money, but the people are losing their jobs. They close the banks too early now; they have lousy hours, and they keep cutting those back. The only thing that keeps them honest are some of the trust companies that they haven't already bought up or the credit unions.

So I would have hoped our members would have had a chance to denounce the hours that banks impose upon the public in this province.

The Speaker: Response?

1750

Mr Gerretsen: Just to continue the argument that was just advanced by the member for St Catharines, what's even more ridiculous is when the banks are open but the tellers are shut. There are many situations like that as well. I always say to my manager in that case, "You stand by the front door and explain to people when they come in that the tellers are shut but the bank is open." Don't have the girls behind the counter do that; I think the manager should do that.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: Most of them are female—I apologize to you for using the words "girls" or "ladies"—and we all know that.

I would just like to respond to what the member from Scarborough Southwest and the member from Etobicoke

North said. We are not against tax cuts. I want you to clearly understand that. What we are against is cutting taxes when you're still running an annual deficit. Can't you get that through your heads?

During your watch, the public debt of this province has escalated from \$90 billion to \$115 billion, which costs more in interest payments, which costs more in taxes that you're collecting from people. You can only talk about tax cuts once you've got the books balanced in any given year, and even then a good argument could be made that perhaps most of the extra money ought to be paid down on the public debt so that you can lower your annual interest payments.

This whole nonsense that Liberals are against tax cuts is something you are promoting which just isn't true. It's a question of when you do it, sir, and you can't do it when you're still running an annual deficit, as we're doing right now.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hastings: It's interesting to again get an opportunity to reiterate the fundamental difference over time. It's not just in the terms of this government, or the terms of the last regime, but over the last 10 years—even the Davis administration. There was an addiction, there was a currency of thinking back then, especially in the last 10 years, that the only way to solve social problems today is to spend money on them. The more money you raise through taxes on people, whatever form they take—consumer taxes, corporate taxes, personal income taxes, user fees, whatever you want to call them—the point is that when they got the money, especially the NDP—but the Liberals are pretty good at trying to remind us about this public debt. But if they were so concerned about it when they came to power under Premier Peterson in 1985, why did they ever allow the debt to bloom from \$40 billion at that time up to nearly, oh, I would say at least \$80 billion, a doubling.

What fuelled this is a currency of thinking that the more tax increases you have, the more government can do for its citizens that the citizens couldn't do for themselves to start with. This is the whole *raison d'être* today of bringing in a milestone in government legislation, and that is the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act. Both elements are essential in turning around a type of thinking that has been so prevalent for the last number of years. That's why this legislation is required in terms of its being an antidote. People are tired, they're fatigued right out with all the tax increases they've had over the years.

That's why they are appalled to a great extent by what is happening in Ottawa today. When you see the federal Liberals talking about a surplus—Gliberals—they're really talking about money that belongs to the taxpayers of Canada, and particularly to the taxpayers of this province of Ontario because we are the largest contributor to equalization funds. We are the largest contributor to the unemployment insurance fund; they can rename it whatever it is, but it's still called the unemployment insurance fund, which is still part of the general treasury. The

whole thing is that is not their money. That money belongs to the people of this country who worked hard to get it. What they ought to be looking at is a strategy of quickly remunerating that money back. Why? Because it's very clear when you look at the newest Nobel prize-winner for economics, Robert Mundell. He has established that when you reduce taxes, whether it be in Canada, the United States or any part of the world, a lower tax regime over time will ensure higher future revenue increases for government purposes. I know that's very hard for the folks across the way to get through their minds.

Why is this so? I would like to quote again from Mr Mundell in an interview by the CBC's Michael Enright last Sunday. It's very clear what he is saying:

"Every country has to decide what proportion of total output of the society it wants the government to organize spending for. In Canada, it might be 50%. In the United States, it might be less than 40%. In Sweden, it goes up to 65%. So there are a lot of people who would like to see the government spending more and those who want to have it less intrusive.

"But my take on this is that the higher the marginal tax rates to support that level of spending, the less efficient economy we'll have and the lower growth will be. The issue to me is that if we want to make the pie bigger, the way to do that is to have an efficient tax system. Any tax rate, once it gets above 30% rate, just involves too many people in avoiding" taxes....

That's why we've also brought in taxpayer protection legislation in parallel with our tax reductions over the last number of years. We want to have future growth so we can have future higher revenues for these services that these people are arguing we require.

We don't disagree on that point. We need high-quality education and health care, but you can't have it under the old, Keynesian system of economic thinking. The 1930s model going into the 21st century is unreal, unheard of and won't work. When are they going to get the message that tax reductions are the way to move into the new century, to create more jobs for people, not fewer.

The Speaker: It being 6 pm, this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 15 at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 15 November 1999


Lundi 15 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 novembre 1999

The House met at 1332.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FERRY SERVICES

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I would like to take this opportunity to share with the Legislature an issue of great importance to the residents of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Amherst Island is located at the east end of Lake Ontario, the gateway to the Thousand Islands. Residents of the island rely on a ferry to travel back and forth to the mainland for work and supplies.

Unlike many ferry services in the province, the residents of Amherst Island pay to travel to and from the island. During the summer months, residents travel on a large, stable ferry, the Frontenac II. In the winter months, the islanders are expected to use the smaller ferry, the Amherst Islander. The smaller ferry has only half the vehicle capacity of the Frontenac II. Even after recent dock renovations, vehicles continue to experience difficulty when boarding and exiting the smaller ferry because of low water levels. Last week, service to the island had to be cancelled because rough waters made the use of the smaller ferry unsafe. Also, there are no life jackets available on the lower car deck, but only on the upper passenger deck. Both of these situations present serious safety concerns for the ferry users.

The Ministry of Transportation has indicated that the larger Frontenac II will not be available to serve the residents of Amherst Island year-round. Essentially, an antiquated agreement will be maintained even though it is well known that this agreement does not provide adequate, equitable or safe—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member's time is up.

POLICE MEMORIAL

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Today in Ontario, police officers across the province put their lives on the line to serve and protect us. I'd like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the dedication and courage of Durham, and indeed all Ontario, police officers. Each

time a police officer is killed in the line of duty, the whole province shares in the tragedy.

It is important to honour our fallen officers. As members of the Legislature will know, the Ontario government recently unveiled its plans for building a permanent memorial to fallen officers on the grounds of Queen's Park. In September, Premier Harris and Solicitor General David Tsubouchi met with the families of several fallen officers. The Premier and the Solicitor General shared with them a model of the monument and confirmed this government's support for police officers in Ontario. The memorial, by the way, is expected to be completed in the spring.

The monument will help to preserve the memories of those courageous officers who gave their lives while serving others. As well, the monument will inspire today's front-line officers with the knowledge that society values them as they continue to face dangers each day.

I would also like to take time to pay tribute to one of my late constituents. Mr. Allan Christiansen of Courtice died in a tragic accident as he was travelling home after celebrating his graduation that very day from the Ontario Police College in Aylmer. Allan was only 22 years old, and he was due to start his policing career with Durham regional police the following week.

I know that Allan was looking forward to serving the people of Durham, and as a father I can tell you my sympathy is with his family and friends at this difficult time.

1340

HEALTH CARDS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Last week the Ontario Legislature adjourned to pay respect to local Canadian heroes, those Canadian veterans and their families who made it possible for all of us to live in peace.

You can imagine how appalled I was to discover that the Ministry of Health was creating anxiety for a family that gave four of its members into Canada's service in the First World War. In its passion to uncover fraudulent use of the health care system, the ministry had turned its zeal on a 93-year-old resident of a Chatham rest home, who has lived in Canada since infancy. He has no landed immigrant papers because papers were not required prior to 1947. But the Ontario government is refusing to

provide a new health card without proper documentation. This takes time and money for census searches.

The ministry asked a 91-year-old woman who could not remember details of her arrival as a young child to go ask her parents. What kind of nonsense is this?

I understand vigilance to protect our health care system from fraud, but it should be tempered with fairness, reason and respect. I ask the Ministry of Health to work directly with the federal government to establish citizenship where documents and knowledge may not be available, and not torture helpless families with mindless bureaucracy.

ROBERT MILLER AND
FERNANDO SCONZA

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I want to take this opportunity to congratulate two members of the Toronto police force stationed at 32 division in the riding of Willowdale. They are Constable Robert Miller and Constable Fernando Sconza. Each of them received the Ontario Medal for Police Bravery last week at an investiture ceremony at Queen's Park.

On July 25, 1998, Constable Robert Miller rescued four individuals from a house with dangerously high levels of carbon monoxide. He did so after entering the house on no less than three occasions to ensure that all the residents were out safely.

On June 2, 1998, Constable Fernando Sconza rescued an elderly woman who had been shot by a gunman. He quickly went to the front porch where she lay bleeding and lifted her away, even though he knew the gunman was still in the house and was armed.

Fernando Sconza and Robert Miller make a difference to our community in Willowdale, and I wish to acknowledge their heroic deeds. These dedicated officers continue to serve and protect the people of Ontario along with thousands of other officers across this province. It is because of them that Ontario is a better and safer place to live. That is why I am circulating a petition throughout Willowdale, which urges the federal government to pass tougher penalties for crimes committed with firearms. Hundreds of Canadians are harmed and killed each year in crimes involving firearms. We owe it to the people of Ontario, we owe it to the fine, brave officers who serve our communities to get tough with violent criminals. We owe it to all of them to make appropriate and meaningful changes—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member's time is up.

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I rise to make members of the Legislature aware that higher learning flourishes in beautiful eastern Ontario, and especially in the city of Kingston. The recent Maclean's magazine rankings for 1999 were published last week. Again, Ontario's oldest institution of higher

learning, with Ontario's second-oldest academic chemistry building, is ranked number two nationwide. I refer, of course, to Queen's University, a splendid institution that counts many on both sides of this House among its proud graduates.

It's been another good year for Queen's. Many of its faculty have won honours for teaching and research. Queen's student engineers recently placed second in the World Solar Challenge car competition in Australia. There they brought greetings during the race from Kingston, Ontario, to the people of Australia.

Queen's ranking of 1999 academic all-Canadians is number one in the country. Again, in 1999, Canadian Business magazine ranked Queen's School of Business number one in the country. Queen's technology transfer organization, Parteq, is ranked among the outstanding commercialization groups in North America.

Now Queen's looks to the contribution it will make in the year 2000 to help solve double cohort enrolment problems, along with taking on the challenge to become number one in the rankings next year.

In closing, let me add that it's no accident of history that the land we occupy here today carries the proud name, Queen's Park.

PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I rise today with regard to something that's happening across north-eastern Ontario that concerns many, not only the north-east but I think concerns other people as well, and that is the state of the rail passenger services across northeastern Ontario.

You would know, that the government of Ontario is responsible for the ONR. In the past, it used to subsidize that train in order to make sure that the train was there for the people who needed it. In many instances, the train is the only way for people to be able to move from one community to the next or to be able to visit families or keep doctors' appointments in Toronto or North Bay, or wherever it might be.

What's different today is that you have a government in power, the Conservative government, with the Premier from North Bay where the head office of the ONR is, who don't give a darn about the train. They've reduced and eliminated entirely the subsidy that was paid to the ONR. We find ourselves in a position now that the government, by way of a special committee, is trying to figure out how to deal with the train—just the buzzwords in order to be able to get rid of it—and we ask ourselves what the future is. We know the future isn't bright.

I want to remind the House that it was the Premier, the leader of the third party, the member for Nipissing, Mr Michael D. Harris, who back in the early 1990s sent a letter to the National Transportation Agency saying that the train was important and a vital transportation link for the people of northeastern Ontario.

I want to know what happened between then and what's happening now. Why is it, when you're the gov-

ernment and you have the authority to deal with it, you don't and you turn your back on the citizens of north-eastern Ontario?

CRIME PREVENTION

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to speak on an issue that is of great importance to the residents of York North and all Ontarians: crime and safety.

First, I would like to welcome the many police officers who are here in attendance today and thank them for their dedication and courage.

Last Wednesday I hosted a crime and prevention community forum in the town of Newmarket. I want to thank all those who took part, especially my constituents and the members of the York region police.

After listening to the constituents, I can tell you that people are pleased that finally a government takes crime seriously. We have listened to our fellow Ontarians. Our government believes that only when we get tough on crime will our communities be much safer than they were in the past.

During the forum, my constituents praised many of our government's steps on combating crime, such as 1,000 new police officers and 90-day suspensions, to name a few. Working in partnership with our police forces, we believe these steps will make Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family. However, across the House from me it is quite a different story. The Liberals do not seem to understand that people do not feel safe in their communities.

My community forum on crime and prevention is another example of our government listening. While the Liberals make excuses for criminals and do nothing, we will work with our police and the public to fight crime.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): In July the Minister of Health assured us that her government had fixed the problems of overcrowded emergency rooms once and for all. Last Wednesday 17 hospitals in the Toronto area were on emergency room redirect. They were not accepting patients coming in by ambulance. Ambulance drivers had to try to find a place for their critically ill patients in one of the five hospitals that were still taking emergencies in their emergency departments. Sometimes the ambulances just stayed in the parking lot, waiting until there was room.

The government spokesman once again assured us that patients would be assessed within 15 minutes of coming into an emergency room, which is not very reassuring if you can't get into the emergency room in the first place. Why are the emergency rooms so crowded that they cannot take emergency patients? Because they are full of people who need to be cared for in hospitals that are already filled to overflow levels.

One caller to our office last week told us about more than 30 patients lying on gurneys in an emergency room

hallway because there were no beds available in the hospital in Mississauga.

The minister may say you don't have to wait hours to be assessed in the emergency room any more, but you still have to wait to get into the emergency room, you still have to wait for treatment, and you still wait for a hospital bed if you need to be admitted.

This is not just a Toronto problem, and the problem can only get worse, not just because the winter flu season is coming but because the hospital restructuring process is just beginning to shut down acute and chronic care beds. Half of our hospitals are running deficits trying to meet the needs of patients who come in their doors. This government has not fixed the emergency room situation once and for all. Ask any patient who needed emergency care last week.

1350

GRAFFITI

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): In the spring of 1996, Guelph police constable Doug Pflug noticed a disturbing increase in the amount of graffiti in the city of Guelph. He took it upon himself to find a strategy to combat this problem.

He first solicited the help of a known local graffiti artist. One of the solutions proposed was to find free wall space where the artist could paint legally. Within weeks, while city workers cleaned old graffiti off walls elsewhere, the artist had transformed a grey cinder block wall inside Guelph Memorial Gardens arena into a bright, dynamic mural.

Constable Pflug then convinced the local businesses and media to sponsor the annual Guelph police graffiti contest, which again allowed the youths a chance to demonstrate their talent, and this time compete for prizes, in a positive legal way on legal canvas.

Eventually, permanent space was freed up in a downtown tunnel running under the CN rail tracks.

At this point, graffiti in the city of Guelph has been reduced by 90%, saving property owners and local taxpayers the cost of cleaning it up, and one of the local artists has since been accepted to study art at university.

My congratulations to Constable Pflug and to all others who find creative solutions to turn around nuisance activities.

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On Monday, October 25, the member for Windsor-St Clair rose on a point of privilege on a matter respecting the non-passage of a supply bill for the fiscal year ending March 31. I thank the House for its patience while I took time to consider this matter.

In his point of privilege, the member for Windsor-St Clair referred to the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act, section 14, which says: "Despite anything else in this act, whenever the Assembly has concurred in the

report of the committee of supply recommending the passage of any estimates, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may authorize the payments of any items so concurred in."

The member then referred to order in council 626/99, which invoked this provision in circumstances where supply had been concurred in, but the supply bill itself had not been passed.

The intent of the March 24, 1999, order in council was "to appropriate the expenditures approved by the assembly to the votes and items of the estimates and supplementary estimates concurred in by the assembly...."

According to the member, the order in council had no legal validity because section 14 of the act, in referring to the committee of supply, which no longer exists, was no longer operative.

I've had an opportunity to review the member's submissions, the submissions of the government House leader, and our parliamentary precedents.

My response to the member's submissions begins with a ruling on January 22, 1997, by Speaker Stockwell. In that ruling, as the member for Windsor-St Clair noted, the Speaker found a *prima facie* case of contempt had been made in circumstances where the ministry pamphlet undermined respect for the parliamentary process. In the case at hand, the member states that the order in council similarly undermines respect for the parliamentary process.

With great respect, however, there are important differences between the circumstances in 1997 and those before me now. First, unlike in 1997, the action in the case at hand is the passage of an order in council pursuant to a provision in the act of this Legislature.

The second difference is that, unlike in 1997, the Speaker is in effect being asked to consider and decide on legal and constitutional issues that, according to our own precedents and various parliamentary authorities, are better left to the courts and litigants.

Let me refer to Speaker Edighoffer's ruling on April 23, 1990, when he said, "Speakers in this Parliament and other parliaments throughout the Commonwealth have consistently held the view that the Speaker will not give a decision upon a constitutional question or decide a question of law."

For other precedents and authorities to the same effect, I refer the members to page 6538 of our Hansard for January 28, 1997, pages 7227 and 7228 of our Hansard for February 26, 1997, and citation 168(5) of the sixth edition of Beauchesne.

Whether the fact that a committee of supply no longer exists works to invalidate section 14 of the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act is clearly a legal question, not a procedural one.

The precedents and authorities therefore being clear and consistent on this point, I find that a *prima facie* case of contempt has not been made out.

My only other observation about the member's submissions deals with their timeliness. This House met on 12 sessional days over seven calendar days after the

passage of the order in council and before the dissolution of the 36th Parliament. Not only has a considerable amount of time passed since order in council 626/99 was made, but we are now in an entirely new Parliament.

It is important that members do not delay in raising a point of privilege lest it be ruled out of order due to the passage of time. A point of privilege should be raised at its earliest possible opportunity and in the Parliament to which it relates. In this regard, I refer the members to citation 115 of Beauchesne.

I thank the members for their patience.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PEMBRIDGE INSURANCE COMPANY ACT, 1999

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr13, An Act respecting Pembridge Insurance Company.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ONTARIO MARINE HERITAGE ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LE PATRIMOINE MARIN DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Barrett moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to preserve Ontario's marine heritage and promote tourism by protecting heritage wrecks and artifacts / Projet de loi 13, Loi visant à préserver le patrimoine marin de l'Ontario et à promouvoir le tourisme en protégeant les épaves et les artefacts à valeur patrimoniale.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): This bill creates a new act, the Ontario Marine Heritage Act, 1999. Under the new act, the crown is the owner of every abandoned wreck sunk in waters on crown land in Ontario that has been submerged for more than a prescribed period of time. These wrecks are called "heritage wrecks" in the act.

The new act defines "marine heritage site" and prohibits anyone who does not have a licence under the Ontario Marine Heritage Act from entering a heritage wreck or damaging or removing a heritage wreck or protected artifact.

The new act creates an obligation to notify the minister of evidence of a marine heritage site. The minister must publish a record of marine heritage sites known to the minister.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on November 15, 16 and 17, 1999, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POLICE OFFICERS

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I rise today in a very non-partisan spirit to speak not just for the government but on behalf of all the people of Ontario.

Today I want to pay tribute to Ontario's police officers, brave men and women who risk their lives in the service of others. Like so many in this province, I consider the work of police officers—their calling, if I can use that term—to be one of the highest forms of public service.

We are all very fortunate to be served by the dedicated men and women of Ontario's many police forces. We depend upon them every day. We know the risks they take. Today, on behalf of the people of Ontario, I just want to take a moment to say thank you.

1400

Police officers are there for us. People know that and they count on them. In return, I want to say to all police officers in Ontario: You can count on us to be there for you. My wish is that that sentiment be unanimous, but there will always be some who disagree. To them I ask, what does it say of our society if we forget the contribution of those who risk their lives to protect us? When some people urge government to place new restrictions on police chasing suspects rather than new restrictions on suspects fleeing police, what message does that send to our children? There is no room for neutrality between victims and their assailants and between lawbreakers and those who seek to enforce the law.

Have no doubt where this government stands: We stand solidly on the side of victims and solidly behind the men and women who risk their lives to support the law. That is why we have moved to meet the requests made by police officers across this province.

We are helping to place new front-line officers on the streets of Ontario communities: 534 so far, with a goal of 1,000 by next year.

We are working with police to implement a rural crime prevention strategy, part of our \$150-million community safety commitment.

We introduced and passed the Community Safety Act allowing police to notify communities about the presence of high-risk offenders. As the next step, we will reintroduce Christopher's Law, which would create the country's first registry of pedophiles, of rapists, of child molesters and of other convicted sex offenders.

Responding to the concerns of police officers in urban communities, we have introduced the Safe Streets Act. This law would give police the tools to crack down on aggressive panhandlers and on squeegee people who harass and intimidate motorists.

We created and we will introduce legislation to strengthen the role of the Office for Victims, chaired by victim advocate Sharon Rosenfeldt, and served as special counsel by Scott Newark, former executive director of the Canadian Police Association.

We have renewed the mandate of the Crime Control Commission. The member for London-Fanshawe, Frank Mazzilli, a former London police officer whom I am proud to have serve as a member of our caucus and as parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, is one of the commissioners. The member for Cambridge and parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, Mr Martiniuk, is the other.

Within this term, we will fulfill our Blueprint commitments to introduce a Parental Responsibility Act and to introduce measures to strengthen the ability of municipalities and the province to crack down on establishments where it can be shown that illegal acts, including the use and sale of narcotics, habitually occur.

Together with police officers and concerned citizens across Canada, we continue to press the federal government to strengthen the law governing young offenders, repeal the "discount law" that lets offenders out of prison after serving only two thirds of their sentence, repeal the "faint hope" clause that causes victims so much trauma and so much grief, and stop giving federal pardons to convicted sex offenders.

We have also moved to establish a permanent memorial to police officers killed while serving others. I know that some members of this assembly have spoken critically of the police memorial. Some may believe that the memorial is inappropriate or that the sacrifices of these brave men and women do not justify the cost. Today I am urging all members of the assembly to put aside partisan differences and recognize the contributions made by the men and women of Ontario's police forces, both past and present members. In particular, I ask all members to join in endorsing the police memorial project, a fitting and appropriate tribute to the memories of 192 men and women who served their communities at the cost of their lives.

I encourage all people in this province to support their local police, to remember the dangers they willingly face, and to join in saluting Ontario's police officers, both past and present.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just a quick reminder to our guests that it is a rule that there is to be no clapping in the House. I know that sometimes that rule would like to be pushed aside on some occasions, but it is a rule, so I would ask our guests to refrain from clapping.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I rise today to inform the House that shortly this government will be taking further action to make Ontario's streets safer.

We have all witnessed the tragedies that have resulted when those committing criminal acts take reckless flight from the police. Some people will argue that crime is not a major problem. They'll blame anyone but the criminals. Try telling that to the victims and the victims' families.

We have demanded the federal Liberals amend the Criminal Code to include stiffer penalties for criminals who take reckless flight from the police, but in the absence of federal action we are moving forward to make Ontario's streets safer.

We've met with many groups, including the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Ontario Provincial Police Association, and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. Today we are responding to their concerns and their input to address criminals who take reckless flight from the police.

I'm pleased to tell members that shortly our government will be introducing amendments to the Highway Traffic Act. These amendments, if passed by the Legislature, would, in cases involving bodily harm and death, provide for court-ordered driver's licence suspensions of not less than 10 years and up to life, with the suspension being consecutive to any other suspensions; increase the existing provisions for driver's licence suspensions for escape-by-flight offences to five years; double the fines for failing to stop for police up to \$10,000; and introduce a fine for escape-by-flight offences of up to \$25,000. These amendments would also impose a jail term for escape-by-flight offences for up to six months. Furthermore, the proposed regulatory change would increase the demerit points available for this to seven points.

Criminals who try to take reckless flight from the police, endangering innocent citizens and police, must be made accountable. All too often the critics point their fingers to the wrong people. It's time to get tough with those who think they can get away with endangering the lives of the police and innocent bystanders. We have to make our streets safer and start putting the blame where it belongs: on the criminals who take reckless flight from the police.

Criminals fleeing from police must be stopped quickly and safely. We will not solve this problem until we make it clear to offenders that attempting to escape is not an option.

In consultation with Ontario's police services, this government has already taken action to better train and equip Ontario's police for situations in which criminals take flight from the police. Last April, for the first time in

Ontario, we announced the development of a new regulation under the Police Services Act to provide better guidelines for police officers who find themselves in pursuit situations. The guideline is in the hands of Ontario's police services and they are developing procedures to ensure their officers are familiar with the guidelines. At the same time, the Ontario Police College is developing new training procedures to complement this regulation.

To encourage alternatives to pursuits, we have provided funding as well to tire deflation devices and helicopter pilot projects.

Our objective is to have the toughest penalties in this country for criminals who try to take reckless flight from the police. I call on all members of the House to support these measures to make our communities safer.

1410

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I'm honoured to join in saluting the vitally important contribution Ontario's police forces make in preserving public safety in our province. I know the people of Ontario deeply appreciate the courage and the dedication of the police officers who put their own lives at risk to protect all of us.

As the Premier has just outlined, the Ontario government is bringing forward changes to help police get the job done on the front lines, changes like the Safe Streets Act introduced in this House earlier this month. This battle is a battle we cannot win on our own. The federal government must be a committed partner in the war on crime, yet the federal government has taken no action to repeal the so-called faint hope clause, which allows convicted murderers to apply for early parole and reduced sentences, and which brings families of victims back to court to relive tragic memories. It has taken no action to repeal the discount law under which offenders can get out of jail after serving only two thirds of their sentences. The people of Ontario demand truth in sentencing; 25 years should mean 25 years.

The public is especially concerned about the rise in youth crime. The federal government had a chance to address this in a comprehensive way when it reviewed the Young Offenders Act. It chose not to do so. As a result, the proposed legislation is woefully soft on violent young offenders. The people of Ontario demand stronger legislation to deter violent crime and hold young offenders accountable.

Our government has made it clear where we stand: on the side of law-abiding citizens and on the side of those who protect them. The people of Ontario are now asking the federal government where it stands.

The Speaker: Responses?

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Let me say at the outset that we in our party as well are very grateful for the sacrifices and the good work performed day in and day out by police right across the province. We acknowledge their work and thank them for that as well.

I also want to say that I am pleased to support the government's intention to create tougher penalties for drivers who flee our police and who, by so doing, endanger lives. In the past year, eight Ontarians have been killed in police chases: Father Mioviski, a priest here in Toronto, who was killed while changing a flat tire, was hit by a car that was being chased; John Gibbons, a 47-year-old father of six, hit by a pickup truck fleeing from the police; Sergeant Richard McDonald, a Sudbury police officer killed while laying down a spike belt, trying to stop a van that was being pursued by police.

When someone in a vehicle flees our police, that vehicle becomes a deadly weapon and people's lives are put at great risk. For that reason alone, this crime should be met with serious consequences.

In addition to toughening up our provincial laws, we believe the federal government has an important role to play here as well, so we're calling on the federal government to consider three things. First of all, we ask them to create a separate Criminal Code offence for escape-by-flight offences. Second, we're asking that the federal government create serious minimum sentences that will constitute a real deterrent for escape-by-flight offences. Third, we're asking that the federal government enable our judges, in the most severe cases, particularly those involving a loss of life, to impose a life sentence. I can assure the House that I will be pleased to work with the Solicitor General, the Attorney General and the Premier to lobby Ottawa for those changes to our Criminal Code.

While I'm happy to support these changes, I'm happy to tell you what else we in the Liberal caucus will be happy to support. The government has gone to some lengths today to tell us about the failures of the federal government to act on a number of fronts when it comes to making Ontario safer for Ontarians. Let me tell you that we've been asking this government—begging this government—for over two years now to support tougher penalties for the customers of child prostitutes. That was a part of our recommendations put forward in our First Steps document, and Rick Bartolucci, my caucus colleague, has brought forward a private member's bill on numerous occasions to try and force this government to take action.

We've also put forward the idea of creating safe school zones, in which any drug or weapons offence would result in stiffer penalties.

We support greater funding for the Ontario Provincial Police Project P in the fight against child pornography in an era where anyone with access to the Internet has the potential to download pornography right into the comfort of their living room.

We support Richard Patten's changes to the Mental Health Act that we believe will go a long way towards making Ontario safer. We also support provisions that would prevent mental health patients from being discharged unless they can be guaranteed help in the community.

We support gun registration.

We support photo radar. We believe that our police should have as an additional weapon in their arsenal photo radar. By the way, we believe that any funds levied from fines for photo radar should be directed to our policing efforts in Ontario, either to hire more policing or to make our highways and our roads safer.

I can also tell you, Mr Speaker, that we support an end to the privatization of policing services across Ontario. The Premier's former Solicitor General has suggested that municipalities should deal with your cuts to municipalities by replacing highly trained public police officers with security guards. If the government wants to put forward a bill to stop the privatization of our police, we would be delighted to lend support on that front as well.

I think it is plain that all Ontarians have a real and genuine interest in making Ontario safe for everybody, and it's not this government alone that represents the interests of our police and those who have a concern about criminality in Ontario. We have a number of ideas that we've put forward and we look forward to working with this government, should they so choose to move forward.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Speaker, allow me first of all to say to the Solicitor General that we appreciate very much that he is bringing forward this legislation. We will work with him and with his government to ensure that the legislation that is passed is good legislation and that it addresses the problem which has been out there, not just recently but for some time now.

I say as well to all of the police officers across the province that you have our support in ensuring that crime prevention is truly the agenda of the whole province, in ensuring that our streets are safe and secure and that our citizens are safe and secure. That continues to be the agenda of the whole province.

I want to make some comments, however, on what I believe is really happening out there, because part of the contribution to the debate must be not just to congratulate but also to note what is really going on.

I say to the government that you cannot achieve good crime prevention in this province by press release alone. I fear that on occasion that is what it appears to be to many people across the province.

For example, we watched in this Legislature a while ago when, with much excitement and much pronouncement, you brought forward your so-called victims' rights legislation. That legislation has been to the courts and the courts have had an opportunity to comment on that legislation. I'm not exaggerating when I say that when the courts considered that legislation, they found that it gives no rights to victims; it gives no advantage to victims; in fact, it is superficial, hollow and shallow. It does absolutely nothing to advance the position of victims in our law enforcement system.

1420

Then there's the issue of the rural crime prevention strategy. I want everyone to know I think that's

important. I think that's very important. But I want people to know that if you actually go out there to rural communities across this province, many of them experience longer response times than ever before. The response times for the police to be able to address what is happening is growing longer, not shorter. How police officers are going to be able to concentrate on crime prevention in rural communities when the response time for crimes that are committed is growing longer is, I think, a logical impossibility.

The government mentions its Crime Control Commission—I would say the so-called Crime Control Commission. I'm not going to make any comments on it. I think it distinguished itself by its comments about the Santa Claus parade a year ago.

What needs to be said is this: The fact of the matter is, we support police services across this province. But if we support police services across this province, why are there fewer police officers in the province today than there were five years ago? That is the reality of what is happening, and we should thank Statistics Canada for reminding us of it.

Statistics Canada tells us that in 1994 there were 20,737 police officers in Ontario. Today, there are 20,454—some 283 fewer police officers in the province, even though the population has grown by several hundred thousand people. The number of police officers out there is dropping when the population is increasing. I think it's a logical impossibility to say that you support police when in fact, as a result of government policy, the number of police officers on our streets is being reduced.

There's more, though. In fact, in the next two years some 5,730 police officers are going to retire and the government doesn't even have a plan to keep up with that natural rate of retirement. I'd hoped we would have announced here today a plan by this government to address the shortage of police officers and to address the fact that nearly 6,000 police officers are going to retire over the next two years but, alas, there is nothing.

People in our communities want to feel safe and secure on our streets, but what is happening out there, unfortunately, is that the well-off can feel safe and secure because they can hire private security agencies, but those who are not well off are witnessing a situation where we have fewer police officers, where the response time is, unfortunately, growing, not decreasing.

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Before we begin oral questions, I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today 10 interns from the federal Parliament internship program who are currently visiting Queen's Park. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

WEARING OF RIBBON

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): Speaker, I'd like to ask the House for consent to continue to wear the ribbon which represents the school colours for one of the schools in my riding which is visiting the House today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed?

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm afraid I heard some noes. I'm sorry, I did hear some noes.

POLICE MEMORIAL

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: In light of the absence of an endorsement in the response as just delivered by the opposition, I seek unanimous consent to move a resolution without notice endorsing the memorial to be dedicated to our police officers killed in the line of duty and that the vote on this resolution be taken immediately.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed. The Solicitor General.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The resolutions reads:

"Be it resolved that, in the opinion of this House, the expenditure of public funds on the memorial being erected on the south side of the Whitney Block here at Queen's Park is a fitting, appropriate and worthwhile commemoration of those many brave men and women who, as members of Ontario's police forces, have been killed in the line of duty while protecting our homes and our communities, having made the ultimate sacrifice while dedicating their lives to helping the citizens of Ontario feel safe and secure."

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Last week some very troubling information was brought to the light of day. A ministry official with the former Solicitor General, by the name of Betty Doan, gave sworn testimony to the effect that the most senior staff person of your former Solicitor General ordered her to falsify a document. It appears that she was directed to do so in order to cover up knowledge that the minister was aware that there were concerns that young offenders had been abused in a provincial jail and did nothing about this. We're talking about sworn testimony to falsify documents, the order coming from the most important person working in the former Solicitor General's office, his right-hand person.

Premier, will you do the right thing today and ask Mr Runciman to resign while a legislative committee investigates these very serious allegations?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): For the record, it's not Betty Doan, it's Betty Dean. Also for the record, the former Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services, the Honourable Bob Runciman, indicated to this House in that position over three years ago that he first became aware of the incident at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre in June 1996. Minister Runciman, as every member of this House knows, has the utmost integrity, and I accept his statements as fact.

Yet again, the members opposite are dredging up old stories and allegations for their political convenience in order to divert attention, I suggest, from the most serious leadership challenge that has faced the Ontario Liberal Party in some time.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, surely your writers can do better than that.

I know you're hoping that this too shall pass, that this will go away and you won't have to face these questions, but we're going to keep coming back to this. In addition to the ministry staffer coming forward last week with sworn testimony, there was a sworn affidavit by the then acting Deputy Solicitor General. That affidavit also said that the minister's office was kept informed of the allegations of abuse as early as March 1996, despite the minister's claims, and now yours, that he didn't know about the allegations until June of that same year.

So we have the sworn testimony of a staffer and we have a sworn affidavit by the acting deputy minister. Premier, do you not think this is a serious matter that warrants investigation by a parliamentary committee?

Hon Mr Harris: Mr Speaker, I refer the question to the Minister of Correctional Services.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I know the leader of the official opposition's researchers have probably told him that this matter of February 1996 is before the quasi-judicial tribunal, and before the courts on a couple of other items. It would be totally inappropriate to discuss that matter here and to speak to the fact that he is raising in this House today.

1430

Mr McGuinty: Nice hand-off, Premier. You get the pre-set script, stand up and deliver that, and then you hand it off to this other guy.

Let's understand once again what we're talking about here. We have a former staffer who issues an order. These are allegations brought forward by third parties, independent parties. They say that Bob Runciman's chief of staff ordered that documents be falsified. Then we have the acting deputy minister who comes forward and says that Bob Runciman's office was aware of these allegations in March and not June, which he said he was in this House back in June the same year.

So again, back to you, Premier. These are very serious allegations. It goes to the heart of what government is all about. It goes to the integrity of your government; it goes to your integrity. Ontarians are demanding that you have Bob Runciman resign and that you give us an opportunity to investigate the matter—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will the member take his seat. Time.

Hon Mr Sampson: If the leader of the official opposition wants to refer to statements made in 1996, he can read Hansard, as I'm sure his researchers have done, and he will find that in June 1996 Mr Runciman said, when he was made aware of that particular incident—it was a subject of extensive questioning that day in the House, and Mr Ramsay from your party said, "I will accept the minister's word on that." I'm surprised that the leader of the official opposition—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Please take your seat. Member for St Catharines, order.

Minister.

Hon Mr Sampson: I would have thought the leader of the official opposition would be interested in what this government has done in response to the issues and incidents around February 1996. I would have thought he would want to know that we have instituted training programs for our correctional officers so that they could specialize in young offenders in our institutions. I would have thought he'd be interested in the cultural review that we undertook to determine how we could properly equip our correctional officers to deal with incidents such as the one around February 1996—

The Speaker: New question.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. As we speak, you will be well aware that there are plans underway for massive new developments on the Oak Ridges moraine. These developments include the construction of 14 new golf courses, and 26,000 new homes housing over 75,00 people.

I took the opportunity last week to visit the moraine and learned in much greater detail about the sensitive aspects of this bioregion. I'm asking you, Minister: In all the circumstances, would not the appropriate thing to do here today be to declare a freeze on all development pending the development of a comprehensive plan that would allow for sustainable development in the future?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): A couple of things: First, the particular issues the member is mentioning are before the OMB, so we'll let them deal with the matter. In the instant case of the applications that are before the OMB, I can tell this House that the honourable member is surely aware that the Ontario government is taking a position at both OMB hearings on the environmental issues that reflect the moraine. We are of the position that there are environmental issues that have to be protected on behalf of the people of Ontario, and we are doing that at the OMB hearings.

In terms of the broader public policy question, yes, we have a balance that has to be struck between prosperity and the environmental aspects of lands, including the

lands on the moraine but also throughout the entire province. When his government was in power they didn't have that problem because there was no prosperity in Ontario. We have the opportunity to balance those issues, and we will balance those issues.

Mr McGuinty: The minister talks about balance, but there has been no balance whatsoever when it comes to his approach in advocating for the environment in Ontario. In fact, you're the guy who has been shilling for developers. What I'm asking you to do, as the Minister of the Environment, is to immediately declare a freeze on all development on the moraine. That's a very simple thing to do.

The people of York, Durham and Peel are asking for the same thing. They're asking your government to show some leadership on this matter. They want a freeze so they can develop tools to ensure that development takes place in a sustainable way. They're asking for a freeze. Will you give us the freeze, Minister?

Hon Mr Clement: Maybe this is a relevant issue to the honourable member as it's probably his first visit to the moraine. I was there well before I became Minister of the Environment. Congratulations on being up to speed, finally, on some of the moraine issues.

I can tell the honourable member that this is an important issue; there's no doubt about that. But it's an issue that is created because we have prosperity in Ontario, because we have lower taxes in Ontario, we have more jobs and opportunities in Ontario, and yes, there is a role to ensure that there is a balance between prosperity and development and the environmental issues that we hold dear for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren. We have that challenge. He didn't have that challenge when he was in government because there was no prosperity and development happening in Ontario at the time. But we will deal with that challenge and we will do so in a way that is fair to Ontario. I can assure the honourable member of that.

Mr McGuinty: I wonder if at some time there might be anybody over on the other side who will stand up for the environment in Ontario, because they have failed to do that yet.

Minister, you have failed to do anything on this score so far except to interfere and to intervene on behalf of developers.

We have put forward a private member's bill that would give the same kinds of protection to the moraine that we give to the Niagara Escarpment. Will you stand up now and support that bill? We have put something on the table. You have failed to act. People in the community are looking for protection; they are looking for leadership. You have failed to show it. We have put a bill on the table. Will you, at minimum, support that bill?

Hon Mr Clement: Perhaps the honourable members are not aware of the private bill that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about. First of all, that private bill apes verbatim the Niagara Escarpment Commission act, so in terms of putting new thought into the process,

congratulations, your researchers were sleeping on the job again.

I can tell the honourable member that we have taken a stand as a government in Ontario. We are before the OMB. I won't comment on the specifics of the case, but we are there to lead evidence—hydrogeological evidence, scientific evidence—when it comes to the environmental issues that are before the board. We have taken a position.

I would ask the honourable member a simple question. We have the advantage here in Ontario, finally under a Mike Harris government, of prosperity, which pays for the things that we care about, including environmental protection. We have taken a stand in favour of prosperity, in favour of jobs, in favour of opportunity. I ask the honourable member, what side is he on?

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. My question concerns the role of a member of your cabinet in what appears to be the cover-up of abuse of young offenders at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre.

We know all about these events. The child advocate reported that young offenders were put in shackles and handcuffs, were kicked, beaten and prodded and left nude, with no clothing, for several hours. We know the child advocate raised her concerns to the deputy minister of corrections in March 1996. We know she continued to do so for two years. And last week, a respected public servant testified under oath that the minister, Mr Runciman, knew and that the minister's executive assistant ordered that a briefing note be changed.

Premier, what are your standards? What happens in your government when your minister's recollection of events is totally at odds with somebody who is giving testimony under oath?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I have already answered this question, and I think the information is before this Legislature, as it was three years ago. You may want to correct the record on the statements that you attributed to Betty Dean. They are totally inaccurate.

1440

Mr Hampton: Premier, we can read the transcripts. We know that on March 4, 1996, the assistant deputy minister of the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services, Michael Jordan, told Kathryn Hunt, the Solicitor General's executive assistant, about the riots at Elgin-Middlesex and the allegations of beatings. We know this because Mr Jordan, who is still an ADM, says this in an affidavit.

We also know that on March 5, the minister's office got a call from a Bluewater inmate's mother telling them she had concerns for her son's safety. Those are the records of events. Your Solicitor General didn't call in the police to investigate until May 31.

Premier, how much evidence does there have to be? What are your standards? What are the standards for a

cabinet minister in your government when public servants give sworn testimony that his recollection of events is totally at odds with what really happened?

Hon Mr Harris: I've seen no such testimony, and the information you've given the House is totally inaccurate, incorrect. You quote Betty Dean and you quote her totally inaccurately. That seems to be your standard. That is certainly not our standard.

Mr Hampton: The Premier would have us believe that the child advocate didn't know what she was doing. The Premier would have us believe that parents who phoned the Solicitor General's office were somehow completely mistaken. The Premier would have us believe that a deputy minister didn't know. He would have us believe that the minister's executive assistant didn't do what she was alleged to do.

Premier, there is a course of events here that goes back over three years. Papers were shredded at that institution, and now it is coming out and it is very clear what the course of events was.

My question for you is: In your government, how do you hold cabinet ministers responsible? What is your course of conduct when it becomes clear that a cabinet minister's version of events is totally at odds with the version of events that is being given under sworn testimony?

Hon Mr Harris: My code of conduct is to insist on the truth, something that seems to have escaped you, sir.

Mr Hampton: I would say we'll let those people who are giving sworn testimony decide what is true.

HATE CRIMES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is also to the Premier. Your government has made a lot of noise about asking the federal government to change the Criminal Code. I'm going to ask you to join with me today in getting the federal government to change the Criminal Code.

Earlier this morning I went to a demonstration where people were demonstrating against the American hate messenger, Fred Phelps. Mr Phelps is an American who advocates hatred towards gay and lesbian people. A police officer has said, "If this was done against a Catholic or a Jew or a black person, charges could be laid under the Criminal Code."

Would you join with me in asking the federal government to change the Criminal Code to make it an offence to spread hatred against gay and lesbian people?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Yes.

Mr Hampton: I'm glad to hear your answer. I'm asking you to join me in sending a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada so that someone like Mr Fred Phelps will not be able to come to Ontario any more, will not be able to come to Canada any more and spread messages that incite hatred towards gay and lesbian people.

Could I have your commitment that forthwith this week, you and I will author a letter to the Prime Minister

of Canada, the federal Minister of Justice, advocating an immediate change in the Criminal Code.

Hon Mr Harris: I think it's a terrific idea. The leader of the New Democratic Party has come forward with a constructive suggestion on how we can work together in this Legislature. It's certainly the first time since the last election, in fact since 1995, that I have seen a party come forward with a constructive suggestion. I accept. We'll jointly author a letter and my office will get in touch with your office and we'll send it off to those Liberals in Ottawa and tell them to do the right thing.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask you to afford the Premier an opportunity to retract his comments. I'm sure he realizes in hindsight that the comment he made regarding the truth, as he was raising in his remarks, really was unparliamentary. I would ask him to withdraw those remarks.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I did not hear the remarks; I was looking for the next question. If the Premier wants to withdraw them, he certainly can do that at any time.

Hon Mr Harris: If I said anything unparliamentary I would happy to withdraw, Mr Speaker.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): A question for the Minister of Education. Minister, behind you today are 40 students from W.D. Lowe Secondary School in Windsor. I had the opportunity to visit that school, and I can tell you that it is a unique and wonderful institution. They speak 17 different languages and represent over 70 different countries.

The problem, of course, is that their school is being threatened with closure because of your funding formula, because you only measure square feet instead of measuring the needs of our students. Minister, you control the dollars; you make the rules. Will you tell these students today that you will fix your formula that counts square feet and not student needs?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I welcome the students to the Legislature. There have certainly been some interesting exchanges for them to witness today.

Trustees have a very difficult authority and responsibility in terms of deciding how to allocate their resources, how to decide which schools should be open and which should be closed. That's not a new responsibility for trustees. They've been doing it for many years. For example, when the honourable member's party was in power, there were 168 school closures. In our mandate there have been 86 school closures.

Because of the sensitivity of those decisions, we believe it is up to the local trustees. They are elected by the community to make those decisions. We heard the message from the boards a year ago that they needed more flexibility. We gave them that. They needed more money to help make those decisions. We gave them that

as well, and I look forward to the final deliberations of the trustees in this community.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): Minister, behind you are 40 students who woke up at 4:30 this morning to be in the House and who hope to hear from you potentially about an exemption. Our school board in Windsor is on record: Your funding formula does not allow this school to stay open. It's not the trustees' decision but your government's formula. These students are here today to hear you tell them, because they live in downtown Windsor, because they're part of an inner-city school the likes of which you will find in Ottawa and Toronto, where they have needs to remain in their community school—minister, will you consider today an exemption of that school funding formula that will benefit not just W.D. Lowe but every other inner city school in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I find it passing strange that the honourable member would ask me to provide a guarantee that her leader was not prepared to give that school when he visited there during the election.

We do understand that trustees—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor West.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate the commitment that students and parents have to a school in their community. That's one of the reasons, when the board said to us that they needed more money to help make it easier to make these decisions so they wouldn't have to close some schools, that they needed more flexibility in terms of how they could make those decisions so they could adequately consult with the community, that we did all those things.

I really believe that it's a difficult decision for these trustees. When we have a school that is less than half full, I think the trustees should take a look at that. I also understand that the community has made recommendations to the trustees—

The Speaker: The member's time—new question.

POLICE PURSUITS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is to the Solicitor General. Minister, earlier today you announced to the House that our government will be seeking changes to the Highway Traffic Act. You also mentioned a regulation that accompanies the legislative changes. Could you please explain what the regulation entails and how it will further give police the tools they need to fight crime?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I'd like to thank the member for Simcoe North for the question. It is true that a regulation has been developed, working with our police stakeholders. We're certainly interested, as is the police community—and all of these are things that the police do already. They already exercise discretion before they embark on pursuing a criminal who is fleeing from them. They make this discretionary call on the basis of the safety of the innocent

bystanders or the community at large and their own safety, balancing this against the importance of catching criminals, in some cases committing very serious crimes. So this is already done. But this has now, through their cooperation, through working with us, been developed into regulation.

There are other safety checks on this as well. The pursuit can be called off at any time. There's also a decision made at the station—

1450

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take a seat. Supplementary.

Mr Dunlop: Minister, could you please explain to me what other efforts we will be making to ensure that our police are able to use this regulation as a tool to crack down on the criminals who take flight from police?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First of all, I'd like to thank the member for putting this in the perspective it should be in. The emphasis, of course, should be on the criminal, because if we didn't have a criminal attempting to escape from the police, very often very recklessly, we wouldn't have an incident. So that's very important. Second, we also believe the training is very important as well. There are some aspects to this that are important. The police need the tools to do their job. They not only need the proper equipment and training, but they also need the tough penalties to enforce against these criminals.

By working with the various police associations or police stakeholders, we have a commitment to work with them now to develop the proper training they need, not only in this area but in other areas as well, because the safety of our officers is of concern to us as a government.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Premier. Your safe streets bill, while attempting to attack Toronto squeegee kids, seems to have a more sinister effect: to block the activities of charities in Ontario.

Under your legislation, students cannot hold up signs along roadways to invite motorists into charity car washes. Since when has this been considered aggressive?

Jim Parent, president of the Windsor Goodfellows, has stated that your legislation would kill his organization. Charities like the Goodfellows rely heavily on newspaper sales at traffic signals for fundraising. This law would be devastating to them.

The government is purposely taking fundraising abilities away from charities. Premier, Bill 8 is bad legislation. Bill 8 has nothing to do with safe streets and everything to do with punishing the good, along with your perception of the bad.

Why is this government making it a priority to undermine community values? Why don't you just withdraw a bad bill?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me respond in general to the question and the rationale behind the question. If there's any specific detail, I'd be happy to refer to the Attorney General by way of supplementary.

What I read into this question is a disgraceful lack of confidence in the police to use common sense in understanding the difference between aggressive panhandling, that which is interfering and causing safety concerns, and the case you raised.

Anybody who would raise that kind of a question, particularly on this day, when a number of police officers are here, has a disgraceful lack of respect for a profession that has a far higher standard than you have.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the member take his seat. I would remind our guests, as I did earlier, that clapping is not allowed in the House by our guests. I understand that they may not have known that, but I have given one warning. I would appreciate it if our guests would not clap. Supplementary.

Mr Crozier: Premier, let me tell you why I raised this question: because your Attorney General, on November 3, when asked about the days soon being gone when firefighters in small towns can stop traffic to ask for donations or teens can stand at the roadside to ask motorists to come to a car wash, replied, "They will have to obey the law."

Staff Sergeant Dave Rossell, spokesman for the Windsor police services, said: "We can't pick and choose which laws we want to enforce and those we don't. We may be put in the position where we'd have to enforce" this law.

Premier, you're the one that's putting charities across Ontario in jeopardy. I raise that question because they want to know why you have such a poor piece of legislation, why you won't withdraw it and why you won't make it an objective of those that you want to—

The Speaker: Time. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: It really is not fair for me to take all these lollipops, so I'll refer the supplementary to the Attorney General.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, member for Sudbury, member for St Catharines.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The member opposite speaks about obeying the law, and indeed this bill, if passed by the Legislature, would apply to all people in Ontario. We're all subject to the rule of law and we're all obliged to obey the law, whether we're politicians or we're anyone else in this society, but I'd recommend to the honourable member that he read the bill before he comments on it.

In terms of holding a sign on the sidewalk, you'll see that the bill says "soliciting on the roadway." That's what the member will see if he bothers to read the bill. He'll also see in the bill, if he bothers to read the bill—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Essex. I won't warn him again.

Hon Mr Flaherty: The member opposite will also see, if he bothers to read the bill, that passive solicitation on the sidewalk and so on would not be prohibited under

the bill. So he is creating a difficulty, quite frankly, that is not created by the legislation. I don't know why he's doing that. I suggest he read the bill carefully, and he'll see that the problem is not present in that bill.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): My question is to the Attorney General, but first I'd like to say that I'm proud to join members on both sides of the aisle in this House in welcoming police officers from various police services in Ontario to the Legislature.

Mr Attorney General, I am a former front-line police officer. My question to you is this: Could you tell us what our government is doing to help police keep streets in Ontario communities safe?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I thank the member for London-Fanshawe for the question. This government has been bringing in a range of measures to assist our police officers in Ontario.

Let me focus on the one that is before the House now. The proposed Safe Streets Act is our government's response to requests from police and others for action to protect the public's right to use our streets and public places without being hassled and without being intimidated. If the bill is passed, it would ban aggressive solicitation, such as aggressive panhandling. It would ban commercial activity on highways, such as squeegeeing. It would ban, in situations in which people are captive, soliciting of them, such as in lineups at automated banking machines. It would ban the disposal of unsafe objects, such as hypodermic needles, used and unused, which our children should not have to walk by on their way to school.

Mr Mazzilli: Could the Attorney General please explain whether the Safe Streets Act will give new powers to police officers as they work to protect Ontario communities?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I'd like to inform the member for London-Fanshawe that the proposed Safe Streets Act would amend the Highway Traffic Act to prevent a person on a roadway from stopping or approaching a motor vehicle and offering to sell any commodity or service. That kind of commercial activity on the highway endangers public safety and is a matter of public protection in Ontario.

The police have requested certain powers which they would need to enforce the law. That does include an arrest power in situations where it's necessary to do that to prevent the continuation or repetition of an activity. Quite frankly, I expect the vast majority of people in this province would obey the law if this Legislature sees fit to pass the law, and it wouldn't be necessary for the police to impose arrest. But if it is necessary, if it's repetitive behaviour, if it's defiant to the police, the police need that power.

1500

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. We have reminded you time and again that you have a terrible record as a government in terms of addressing issues for disabled people. I want to tell you about Gayle Doucette, who is a disabled person in my riding. She applied to the Ontario disability support program in mid-July. She had taken great effort to fill in all the forms. She had given it to her physician. More than a month later, her application form was returned to her, and they said, "In one place, the birth date isn't filled in properly; the complete address isn't filled in properly," despite the fact that in several other places it was.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Question?

Mr Hampton: Anyone looking at the form could have gotten the information from elsewhere in the form, or they simply could have called her. Yet your ministry sends back the application form and delays her support situation for four months. Minister, why are you treating—

The Speaker: Will the member take his seat; it's the time.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Improving income supports to people with disabilities has been a priority of our government. When I was first elected to this place, we had to wait up to two years to see a case adjudicated. We felt that was too long. We have undertaken a step-by-step approach to try to get that down. It certainly hasn't happened overnight, so we're taking every effort to do a better job for people with disabilities. As the member opposite will know, I can't make specific comments on a specific case. I'd be very pleased, if he'd like to send me the information, to look into the specific charges on his behalf.

Our goal is to move from two years to six to eight weeks. As of November, for the cases we receive for adjudication, we'll have it to eight weeks, which is certainly ahead of schedule. Step by step, we're making a better plan for income support for people with disabilities.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Minister, you delayed a woman's much-needed disability benefits for three months because of an incomplete birth date and address. You sent the whole package back to her instead of making a phone call. That sounds like a lot of red tape and wasted time and resources to me. I read from your government's speech from the throne: "Your government will create a permanent red tape watchdog. Its expanded mandate will include subjecting all new regulations to a strict business impact test."

It seems that cutting red tape and improving barriers for business is a priority of your government, but cutting

red tape and barriers for disabled people isn't worth your time. Chaos and delays rule at the ODSP, and for five years, Minister, your promise to the disabled people of Ontario has been broken by failing to pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Minister, I'm asking you again today, will you clean up the mess at the Ontario—

The Speaker: Order; member's time. Minister?

Hon Mr Baird: We made a commitment to create a separate program for income support for people with disabilities because we believed the previous program, when the member opposite served in the cabinet, was not serving people with disabilities well. We took away the label of "permanently unemployable." We're doubling the budget for employment supports to help move people into the working world. It was taking up to two years for people to be able to get their case adjudicated. We found that unacceptable. That's why we set out to change that process, set out to change that system to go from two years to six to eight weeks. The Ontario disability support plan legislation was proclaimed May 1, 1998.

We've made great progress. Can we do a better job for people with disabilities? You bet. Step by step, we are increasing service. I can tell you, we're going to keep working on it, because people with disabilities deserve our respect and our priority in terms of government expenditures.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Attorney General, but in his absence I will pass it to the Premier. My office is inundated with calls from constituents who are being told that they'll have to wait to have enforcement orders undertaken by the Family Responsibility Office. It's my understanding that this is due, in many cases, to the computer system not working properly or in fact not working at all. Others are telling me that when they call for information on their file, they are being told that the system is down. I understand it may not be working until after Christmas or into the new year, and this results in long, long waits while the files are retrieved manually.

Premier, from the beginning your government has made a mess of the Family Responsibility Office, and it's hurting the people of this province. I would ask if you could set your squeegee obsession aside for a few minutes or a few days. My question is, could you use that time to fix the computer at the Family Responsibility Office?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Attorney General is here. I refer it to him.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member opposite for that question. With respect to computerization and the inventory of documents at FRO, I think the issue the member is addressing is that there sometimes is a delay of two to three weeks in inventorying a document in the computer system. That does not mean

that the case is not being worked on. It does mean that it takes some time for scanning to take place. That I believe is the answer to the question raised by the honourable member opposite.

Mr Parsons: The staff are indicating that the computer system is simply not working. The scanner is not working, resulting in months and months of delay.

The offices of the FRO were consolidated in Toronto to improve service, but instead of that we're seeing children in this province not getting the finances they need for food and rent for their family. My question is very simple: When will the system be fixed?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The intermittent systems problems do not affect the timely processing of support payments. I hope the honourable member will convey that to his constituents, that the payment of support payments is not affected by the scanning of documents. That's quite important so that families in Ontario will not have cause for concern over this particular issue.

I would say to the member opposite, when he looks at the Family Responsibility Office, to recognize that the vast majority of people in Ontario who have support obligations, men and women, towards their former spouses and their children are honourably making their payments, and we should remember that. The Family Responsibility Office is dutifully making sure that those payments are getting to the spouses and the children who need them in Ontario.

COMMUNITY POLICING

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Solicitor General. We're all concerned about the safety of our communities and of our families. With Durham region having its first murder, and quite a senseless death, I might add, my constituents are asking, along with officers Ryan and Bell, who have joined us here today, what it is that our government has done and is doing in regard to community policing?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I thank the member for Oshawa for the question. First of all, our community policing partnership program will result, at the end of the program, in another 1,000 front-line police officers on the front lines. This represents an investment of about \$150 million that our government is prepared to do to make sure we do have more front-line policing available.

In addition to that, we fund a number of other programs: Crime Stoppers, the RIDE programs, certainly Neighbourhood Watch and Block Parents.

But community policing is very important to all of us. We believe it's the right direction to take. There are a number of communities across the province—in fact, Ken Robertson in Hamilton, who is the chief there, and also Lenna Bradburn in Guelph, have received an award recently for working with their communities to increase the police presence, but also to work with them on the police relations with the community. These are the types of programs we need to applaud and support, and I was

very happy to be there to make sure that both of them were recognized properly.

Mr Ouellette: Community policing initiatives are extremely important to my and all constituents of Ontario. As we enter the holiday season, could you explain more about the government's support for the Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere program for Ontario?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The RIDE program is very important to all of us. Certainly now we need the awareness, as we get into the holiday season, about drinking and driving and how it is not acceptable in today's society. Since 1994-95, the province has more than doubled the funding for the RIDE program, and this tells you how important it is.

Recently I had the opportunity to go to the National Students Against Impaired Driving Day. The students of Regina Pacis high school were there to rally and to bring awareness of the problems of drinking and driving to other members of the youth community there. I applaud the leadership of these students for working with their community. It bodes well for the future.

Once again, I tell you that this government is committed to cracking down on drinking and driving, as we have brought in tougher rules, as we have brought in a number of programs that will result in less drinking and driving, and endangering our communities.

1510

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Chair of Management Board, and it has to do with government spending. The government has indicated that it plans to cut one cent from every dollar it spends in each of the next two years. So you plan to cut, I gather, \$500 million in the first year and \$500 million in the second year, for a total of \$1 billion. You have also indicated that you plan to increase health spending over those two years by, I think, about \$1.3 billion. The point is that if you plan to cut \$1 billion from total spending and you plan to increase health spending by \$1.3 billion, then I believe, based on what we've been told, that you plan to cut \$2.3 billion from the budget exclusive of health care. That's about a 10% cut.

My question to you is: When do you plan to announce to the police organizations and our education systems exactly how you plan to cut what looks to me like about 10% of their budgets over the next two years?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I don't know where the member opposite gets his numbers. I can tell you that I disagree with the premise.

We are going to fulfill what we said in the Blueprint. This government is different from when your party or the NDP was in power. We believe the taxpayers' money should be used effectively and efficiently. It's an ongoing process, and we will make an announcement in the near future about programs that are no longer needed or that

can be delivered better, not by the government. He will just have to wait for that, because we want to do that in a thoughtful and careful manner.

Mr Phillips: I just take the numbers the government publishes and assume they're correct. What you have said to the public is that you plan to cut 1% of the budget, \$500 million, in each of the next two years. I want you to confirm that in your answer. Second, you have said that that's overall spending, total spending. If that's not correct, then I want you to tell the people of Ontario that it's not correct.

My point is this: According to those numbers, you're going to reduce spending by \$1 billion; you're going to increase health spending by \$1.3 billion; you're going to cut the rest of the budget by \$2.3 billion. If that is not the case, clarify that with Ontario. If you are planning to cut \$1 billion, you still need to cut about 4% out of our education and policing budgets. I simply say to you, these organizations must plan. When will you tell the people of Ontario how you plan to cut either \$1 billion or \$2.3 billion? Tell us what the number is and tell us how you plan to do that over the next two years.

Hon Mr Hodgson: As the member will know, it's slightly less than what they campaigned on to cut. We will be doing this in a thoughtful manner. All programs will be reviewed to see if we need to be in that business any longer or if there is a higher priority. There will be an increase in health care spending. You know law and order has been a priority: We're hiring 1,000 new police officers in this province to crack down on street crime. Your party has been opposed to any initiative to get serious on crime. We're lobbying the federal government to change the Young Offenders Act so we can have more rigorous enforcement.

I don't think you need to sit back and pretend that somehow the Liberals are above this. We will be making an announcement, in a thoughtful and careful manner in the near future, showing where we are going to reduce the cost and size of this government.

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is to the Minister of Correctional Services. Recently the Toronto Sun reported the National Parole Board study showing 58 people were killed by offenders who were under community supervision. I find this alarming and I have to wonder how the decisions are made to release offenders. I also note that what these statistics do not report is the number of crimes other than murder that are committed by those who are paroled federally.

All this leads me to wonder how our own provincial board of parole operate. Specifically, what information is considered as part of Ontario Board of Parole hearings, and what changes have been made to put public safety first?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): The honourable member is quite correct, there are

two parole systems operating in Ontario: one under the jurisdiction of the federal government, dealing with individuals who are sentenced to two years or more; and then one that's run by the province, through the Ontario parole board, which deals with individuals who are sentenced to two years and less.

In Ontario, we consider parole to be a right and not a privilege. That's why our system is tough on offenders and puts public safety at the top priority. Under federal law, of course, inmates are eligible to apply for parole after serving only one third of the sentence. We have to live within that federal law. But when our board in Ontario reviews a parole situation—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Answer.

Hon Mr Sampson: —it considers a number of factors, including for the first time, again because we brought it forward, victims' input, in dealing with parole decisions. They deal with the inmate's current—

The Speaker: Time. Minister, take a seat. Supplementary.

Mr Gill: Minister, I appreciate the information you have given us about how the parole system works. I wonder if the minister could tell us what percentage of offenders who apply for parole are actually granted parole. Can the minister also inform us as to the status of our commitment to Ontarians to require that parolees take part in mandatory drug testing.

Hon Mr Sampson: As a result of the reforms initiated by our government, only 33% of offenders were granted parole by the Ontario parole board last year. That's down from a high of nearly 60% in 1993-94. That's half of what it was.

With regard to the member's second question, I would like to say very directly and very clearly that we will honour our commitment to require parolees to be tested for drugs on a random basis as a condition of their parole release. Those who fail this test will have their parole revoked.

We know that drug abuse is of course not only illegal in itself but is proven to be linked to other criminal behaviours. That's why those on drugs who pose a safety risk to others will have their parole revoked.

NUCLEAR FUEL

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Premier, and it's about the shipment of plutonium to our province. It seems, by the news reports we read today, that the Americans aren't interested any more in shipping plutonium to Ontario. It looks like the federal government was the only level of government keen on this initiative.

I was pleased to stand on the bridge in Sault Ste Marie with our leader, Howard Hampton, and our federal leader, Alexa McDonough, in opposition to this initiative. I was also proud to stand with Greenpeace and other groups, such as my own municipality, First Nations, police associations, the FONOM executive and others, raising some very sincere and genuine concern about the

safety of this particular movement of weapons-grade plutonium.

But there is still a risk that Russian plutonium may come in through Cornwall, and it appears that the government may still go ahead with sending a small amount of plutonium to the Soo for testing purposes. Premier, will you go on record today as opposing the import of weapons-grade plutonium to Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Minister of Energy can respond.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I thank the honourable member for the question. Clearly, the only involvement we would have in this with respect to the energy side and my portfolio is through the new Ontario Hydro, the Ontario Power Generation corporation. They indicated very clearly that they're not interested in burning that plutonium in their Candu reactors. Secondly, all of the safety matters on that are in the hands of the federal government. So you should talk to the Liberals and the federal Liberal government. It's their project; it's their call. We've said we're not interested at this point.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I appreciate that answer, it's a partial answer to the question we have, but it's still a very serious issue, as you know. Just because a large amount won't be going through North Bay is no reason to say that the issue is being won. What we and the people from Cornwall and communities throughout eastern Ontario, who still could be at risk because of this, want to know, what I'd like you and the Premier to say today is that you are going to take specific action as the government of Ontario in dealing with the federal government. I want you to stand and state what kind of action you and the Premier are going to take in terms of talking directly to the federal government to make sure they say no to Russian plutonium coming through Ontario.

Hon Mr Wilson: Quite a long time ago our power company, the Ontario Power Generation Corp, made the very point to the federal government that we're not interested in burning that plutonium in our reactors. I don't know how you could be any clearer. I don't know where they're going to go with it if they're not going to burn it in the Candu reactors, so I think that pretty well shuts things down. You see the United States indicating that they're not interested in sending weapons-grade plutonium across the border. I expect the federal Liberal government will make the proper decision in this case. We've made our position quite clear.

1520

POLICE SERVICES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Solicitor General. Earlier this session I pointed out in a statement that there's a genuine concern from the public at large and from the police associations across the province regarding the possible privatization of police forces,

something we on this side take very seriously. It has been brought up in caucus several times.

Schermerhorn, in the Kingston Whig-Standard, said that during their meeting with former Solicitor General Runciman, the Solicitor General suggested that Napanee look into having a private security firm do some of the OPP work for them. Whether or not that's a misquote, it caused a problem in our community as to whether this government is contemplating privatizing the police forces of Ontario in any way, shape or form. Would you tell us today that you have no intention of privatizing police in Ontario?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Let me start with a definitive statement: I don't favour privatizing police services in Ontario, no.

In fact, I was able to convey that to both the PAO and the OPPA at meetings we've held in the last several months. People need an Ontarian accountability. That accountability means that you feel the police are there for you in your communities. We trust the police. I don't believe there's the same trust in privatized services in this area. People need that accountability. I believe in the police, we believe in the police, and the answer is no, we don't believe in privatizing the police.

Mr Levac: Believe it or not, the question wasn't answered. We need your commitment that you will not privatize police forces. We don't need the rhetoric that's being said right now. The rhetoric that's being said right now is basically: "We love you. We have our private little meetings."

Will you pass legislation that will not permit privatization of police forces?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I guess I could say, "What part of no didn't you understand?" But again, very clearly, you asked me if we favour privatizing police, and I answered very definitely: no.

POLICE AND FIRE SERVICES BRAVERY AWARDS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): My question is for the Solicitor General. Last week awards were given for police and fire bravery, including, I might mention, two police officers in the community of London. It's a tribute to the men and women of the police and fire services, and it gives our community a chance to feel proud.

Can the minister assure us of his continued commitment to this program, and is the minister prepared to look at ways of expanding it?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): First of all, I was very privileged to be there last week for the firefighters and police bravery awards.

I'm very pleased to say as well that today Bruce Miller, with the London police service, is here in the gallery. Bruce, along with his fellow police officer in the London police service, Brad Merrison, received awards for bravery when they entered a burning building on their hands and knees and, despite the smoke and the danger involved in that, were able to save lives.

That's very indicative of the type of men and women we have serving this province, in both the police services and the fire services. It's really a privilege for us to be able to recognize this bravery, because we speak for all the communities across this province and not simply for our side of the House.

Mr Wood: The minister will be aware that there are a number of community programs associated with these awards. I wonder if he could tell us which of these he thinks are most effective and whether he's prepared to consider expanding the reach of those programs.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: One of the really great things about the police community is that they work very closely with their communities at large. We are privileged as government to work with them to support many programs such as Block Parents and Neighbourhood Watch, and programs such as Crime Stoppers which work against criminals within these communities.

The government just doesn't do this. The various police services do this in their own communities. They have a number of educational programs, they work with the children, and they have forums. Even in my own area, York region, police chief Fantino has set up a number of community forums to get input from the community as to what they believe is important for their safety in their own communities. This is not unique. This happens right across the province, in small communities and large. I have a great hope that this will continue, and I believe it will. Our government will continue to support programs like this.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have a petition that's rather lengthy. I will read it in part:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the effluent coming from the commercial alcohol ethanol plant is creating a noxious smell in the former city of Chatham in the municipality of Chatham-Kent Essex, which has a nauseating impact on citizens who breathe it in;

"Whereas the citizens of Chatham have repeatedly brought this problem to the attention of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and the former MPP for Chatham-Kent;...

"Whereas the citizens of Chatham-Kent Essex believe that they have a right to clean air and that Commercial Alcohols Inc must be subject to the environmental law in place to protect citizens;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in regulation 346 of the Environmental Protection Act be immediately enforced on Commercial Alcohols Inc to ensure that the citizens of Chatham and the surrounding area have fresh air to

breathe, free from the noxious odours that are spewed by the ethanol plant located on Bloomfield Road, in the westerly outskirts of the former city of Chatham in the municipality of Chatham-Kent Essex."

I affix my signature to it.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition signed by 150 residents from Scarborough Southwest. It was sent to me by Mrs Cathie Neagle of the Catholic Women's League of Canada at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children are exposed to pornography in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposures to pornography;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to pornography in retail establishments, prevent minors from entering establishments which rent or sell pornography, and restrict the location of such establishments to non-residential areas."

I've affixed my signature to this worthwhile petition.

BONE MARROW DONATIONS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas it has become apparent that there is no co-ordination of the unrelated bone marrow donor program in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas North Bay, Sault Ste Marie, Sudbury and the surrounding areas have an immediate need for a northeastern Ontario bone marrow donor centre that is equipped to address the unique requirements of northerners; and

"Whereas the Ontario bone marrow program is not accessible to the specific needs of northerners;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to establish a northeastern Ontario bone marrow donor centre in order to allow northerners to participate in this life-saving program."

This petition is signed by 3,206 people, and I affix my signature to it.

1530

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I have petitions signed by a number of constituents from my riding, particularly Orangeville, Shelburne and Caledon. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I have signed this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

This is signed again by dozens of my constituents who share this concern, and I've affixed my own signature in full agreement.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I have a petition here signed by over 1,000 constituents from Timiskaming-Cochrane. The petition reads:

"To the Honourable Chris Stockwell, Minister of Labour:

"Whereas there are many unemployed and under-employed workers in this region; and

"Whereas many professional and industrial jobs in this region have been monopolized by Quebec workers; and

"Whereas the Quebec government has never respected interprovincial agreements on cross-border workers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Labour of Ontario as follows:

"We would like the Minister of Labour to impose new hiring regulations on Quebec workers coming to work in Ontario. Furthermore, we would like the minister to implement an 'Ontario first' policy on hiring. These policies would help to provide for better jobs for the residents of this province."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the recent changes in boundaries by the Ministry of Health have allowed for Lambton county to no longer be considered underserved in the ratio of patients to ophthalmologists;

"Whereas Lambton county no longer has a local practising ophthalmologist who specializes in retinal laser surgery;

"Whereas the population of Lambton county is 120,000 strong and aging, making travel difficult;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to extend and increase billing caps not only in Sarnia-Lambton but throughout Ontario where necessary to ensure efficient and effective eye care for all Ontarians."

This petition has 2,200 signatures, and I affix my signature to the petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips."

This is signed by many members of my constituency, and I'm very pleased to sign my name also.

HENLEY ROWING COURSE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Henley rowing course in St Catharines is an outstanding rowing facility which has for several decades been the site of hundreds of international rowing competitions;

"Whereas the World Rowing Championship has been held in St Catharines in 1970 and 1999 and has been declared an outstanding success on both occasions;

"Whereas the municipal, provincial and federal governments, along with generous private donors, invested several million dollars in the upgrading of the Henley rowing course to enable the 1999 World Rowing Championship to be held in St Catharines and that as a result the Henley is a first-class rowing facility;

"Whereas the organizing committee of the World Rowing Championship, the annual Royal Canadian Henley Regatta and other prestigious regattas, has the proven expertise to operate major international rowing competitions;

"Whereas all taxpayers in Ontario will be compelled to contribute to any financial assistance provided by the Ontario government for the Olympic bid for the city of Toronto;

"Whereas the creation of a new rowing facility outside of St Catharines for the Toronto Olympic bid would result in the unnecessary expenditure of millions of dollars to duplicate the St Catharines rowing facility;

"Whereas the rowing facility for several recent Olympic Games has been located outside the sponsoring and host city;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to persuade the Toronto Olympic bid committee to propose the Henley rowing course in St Catharines as the site of the rowing competition for the 2008 Olympic Games."

I add my signature, as I know the St Catharines and District Chamber of Commerce would like to add their signature, because they've now joined this crusade.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE STREETS ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Mr Flaherty moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways / Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la sécurité en Ontario en interdisant la sollicitation agressive, la sollicitation de personnes dans certains lieux et le rejet de choses dangereuses dans certains lieux, et modifiant le Code de la route afin de réglementer certaines activités sur la chaussée.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'd like to advise the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for London-Fanshawe, the member for Kitchener Centre and the member for Peterborough.

Today we proceed with the debate on second reading of Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act, 1999. When the people of Ontario talk about the quality of life in their communities, certain things come to mind. Key among these things is the ability to use their streets and their public places without being impeded and without being concerned for their own safety and security. Yet, for the past few years, the experience of many people in large and small urban areas of Ontario has been different. Motorists driving on downtown streets now sometimes find their way blocked by people with squeegees, sometimes cleaning windshields without permission and sometimes being abusive when they don't receive payment. Shoppers, including the elderly, sometimes find they can't get into their favourite department store without being blocked by people who are aggressively soliciting.

We talked with police about this serious problem. We heard them say that, yes, the communities they serve expect them to do something to address these concerns. They told us that they need the tools to be able to do their job.

Parents in some communities have to think twice about letting their kids play in neighbourhood parks. Why? Because of the risk that someone will have carelessly discarded dangerous objects, such as hypodermic syringes, in the sandbox. Imagine a three-year-old child playing in a park, in a sandbox, falling and landing on broken glass, needles or a used condom. I've been told directly by residents about this type of thing happening in downtown Toronto. Our children ought to be able to enjoy their neighbourhood parks with confidence. The sad and unfortunate reality is that in some communities parents sometimes encounter these problems.

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These are problems not unique to Ontario. We find them in other cities and towns in Canada and in the United States, but that does not mean that our government intends to be complacent. Anyone who cares about people and the quality of our lives together in our communities would want us to deal with these problems. The people of Ontario deserve—they're entitled—to be able to go about their daily activities in safety and security.

Our government heard their concerns. We made a promise in the Blueprint, and again in the throne speech. We are keeping our promise. We have introduced the Safe Streets Act. This bill, if passed, would protect the ability of the residents of this province to use and enjoy public places in safety—the roads and the sidewalks and the parks—safe public use of public places, which after all belong to all of us.

I've said it before, and I've even heard opposition members express this same view, that people in Ontario have a right to drive on the road, to walk down the sidewalk and to go to public places without being or feeling intimidated. The opposition justice critic, the member for St Paul's, was quoted in the media as saying this about squeegee people: "We cannot condone the effect within a civil society. You should be able to walk the streets and not be harassed." The member for Eglinton-Lawrence, who is also a member of the official opposition, the Liberal Party, told the Toronto Star a couple of years ago about a personal altercation with squeegee-ers. He told the Star, according to that paper: "A lot of people are fed up with these punks." He said that he himself would propose legislation to give police the right to seize squeegee equipment.

The member for Eglinton-Lawrence can rest easy; he doesn't have to introduce the legislation he talked about introducing to solve the problem, because we have. We have introduced Bill 8. All my colleague has to do now is to cast his vote in support of this bill when the time comes. I'm sure the Liberal member for St Paul's and I'm sure the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, another Liberal member, will be consistent with their previous statements and support this bill when they're called upon to vote on second reading.

Our government has done more than just talk. We have seen the limitations of municipal action here in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada. With the Safe Streets Act, we are the first province in Canada to take a stand and address these problems comprehensively. By introducing this bill, we are exercising our authority to regulate the safe and secure use of public places in Ontario.

The Safe Streets Act proposes to make provincial offences out of the following: commercial activity on the roadways, including squeegeeing; soliciting in an aggressive manner; soliciting in places where the person is not usually free to walk away, what we call captive audience situations; and also, disposing of used condoms,

syringes, broken glass in outdoor places such as parks without taking reasonable precautions.

If the bill passes, all of these activities would become offences for which a police officer can warn or arrest. If passed, the Safe Streets Act would also expand sentencing options for our courts. Penalties would include fine, probation, or jail for up to six months for repeat offenders. Probation itself could consist of community service, restitution, or drug or alcohol counselling.

I am aware that there are some concerns about the impact this bill may have on fundraising campaigns that are carried out on roads and sidewalks. In fact, I believe some members of the opposition, finding that the public is so strongly on side with us on this bill, have taken to creating fear in this regard where none is warranted.

They have been telling the good people in their communities that if the Safe Streets Act becomes law, traditional fundraisers for charities such as car washes for the local school band can no longer be held because these actions would be subject to prosecution. This is a misrepresentation of the intent of this bill. Charitable activities contribute to the quality of life in our communities. Our government knows that; the opposition knows that; the people of Ontario know that.

If this law passes, a Boy Scout or any other volunteer for a charitable organization may continue to solicit in a non-aggressive manner at locations where members of the public are not a captive audience. That is what the bill provides. Those who are trying to create anxiety among our charitable organizations I hope will take the opportunity to actually read the provisions of the bill.

We support the work of charitable organizations. These groups work with police; they work with local authorities year after year to carry out their solicitations in public places, safely and in accordance with the law. We encourage these groups and the volunteers who work with them to continue their good efforts.

Let me speak briefly, if I may, to the two key offences that the bill would create. First of all, commercial activity, including squeegeeing on the roadway—and it's important to emphasize "on the roadway" so that our charitable organizations in Ontario will understand that we're referring to that kind of activity on the roadway and not on the sidewalk, so that's commercial activity—and second, aggressive solicitation.

With respect to commercial activity, the Safe Streets Bill proposes to ban commercial activities such as squeegeeing on the roadway by closing a loophole in the Highway Traffic Act. That act already prevents a person from entering a roadway to stop or attempt to stop a vehicle for commercial solicitation. We're talking about commercial activity, business activity on our highways in Ontario. Squeegeeing takes place when the vehicle is already stopped. Therefore, we propose to change the Highway Traffic Act to make it illegal to also approach a vehicle to offer, sell or provide anything to anyone in that vehicle on the roadway.

I want to point out that with this amendment the Highway Traffic Act would better deal with an activity

that is a safety hazard not just to the people in the car and other traffic but also to the offender in the street.

It is important also to note that this amendment would exempt legitimate emergency services. Tow trucks and the Canadian Automobile Association would still be able to help motorists in trouble without fear of penalty.

Our effort to make squeegeeing illegal has been described as an attack on young people who have no homes or jobs and who are simply trying to make a living. Our government has been accused by some of not addressing the root causes. I think we should take a close look at these claims.

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Our government has allocated \$265 million to employment programs for young people and adults. We fund summer job programs. We fund apprenticeship training. We fund courses on basic literacy, resumé writing and job preparation. We do this to help people who are unemployed get the skills for jobs with a real future.

Does any reasonable person believe that squeegeeing gives a person a chance of a better future? Who is being helped if activity that doesn't lead to a better future and endangers the lives of squeegee persons and drivers is encouraged?

In the safe streets bill, aggressive solicitation as a provincial offence includes the following: first, threatening physical harm to the person solicited; second, blocking the path of the person during or after the solicitation; third, using abusive language; and finally, following the person being solicited. The bill also proposes to ban solicitation in places where people cannot easily move away, places like bus stops, pay phones and bank machines.

I don't have to spell out how vulnerable you can feel at a bank machine, particularly if you're alone, if you're an elderly person, waiting for the cash and card to come out. You are in a captive situation. Someone who approaches you in order to solicit compromises your safe use of a public place.

With its provisions against captive audience solicitation, Bill 8 aims to further protect people's ability to feel safe and secure in their own communities.

I want to stress that the bill does not restrict all types of solicitation. A person may solicit in a non-aggressive manner at locations where members of the public are not a captive audience. Nor does this bill interfere with the ability of persons to freely and effectively speak or communicate with others. The bill does allow members of the public to freely choose whether to stop and listen to the person soliciting or to proceed on their way.

Our government is aware of concerns, and they've been raised with me, that this bill would affect mentally ill people who act out on the streets. This is not the intention of the bill. We have, in fact, committed to spending \$45 million in each of the next three years to provide housing and other supports for people with serious mental illness. About \$16 million was allocated

in 1998 to fund 24 assertive community treatment teams for people who are severely mentally ill.

In addition, at a number of court locations in Ontario offenders who are mentally ill may be directed to treatment programs at the discretion of the crown attorney. There's a good example of that in Toronto. In 102 court in the old city hall in Toronto, there is a specialization in treating offenders with mental illness. An on-site psychiatrist and a mental health worker provide direct services. These include assessment of fitness to stand trial or designing a course of treatment for the offender to follow.

Overall, our government is reviewing the Mental Health Act and related legislation to see how we can fix laws that stand in the way of families and police and social workers, all trying to help the mentally ill.

It has also been said that panhandlers and squeegeers are homeless and that our government is not doing enough to address homeless issues. Let me set the record straight. Every year, the province spends more than \$2 billion to help people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. That's not \$2 million, it's \$2 billion of taxpayers' money, of the citizens' money, in Ontario.

In March of this year, our government announced \$100 million in new initiatives that will dedicate more resources to affordable housing, supportive housing for people with mental illness and other community supports. This includes incentives to help families move out of hostels and into more permanent housing.

We have made clear our willingness to work with other levels of government, with communities, not-for-profit groups and the private sector to help those who are homeless now and to prevent homelessness in the future. We cannot force people to undertake our programs. We can make these programs available and accessible, and that is what we have done.

But let me once again remind the House of the fundamental intent of this bill, the Safe Streets Act. The bill proposes to help make it easier for the people of Ontario to use public places safely. It is designed to protect the ability of children and seniors, women and men across this province to safely use their streets, highways, laneways, parks, parkettes, schoolyards. It is about regulating conduct to enhance quality of life in our communities.

The introduction of the Safe Streets Act is action in response to the concerns we've heard from the people of Ontario. They have asked us to act on the problems of squeegeeing and aggressive solicitation, which have interfered with their safe passage in public places. They have asked us to act to keep their neighborhoods free from carelessly-disposed-of dangerous objects.

Our government is exercising its responsibility and taking leadership to maintain and protect the ability of Ontario residents to use their streets, sidewalks and parks in a safe and secure manner. I urge the members of the opposition to support the right of the people of Ontario to have access to public places without interference and intimidation.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's a great honour to stand before the Legislature today as a new member and give my first formal speech in this historic building. As I walk through the halls and see the portraits of those who have been so fortunate to serve here prior to all of us, I'm reminded of what a great province and what a great country we live in.

Like many Canadians, I emigrated to Canada as a young child. I grew up in London and learned a sense of community and responsibility from my parents, who worked hard and sacrificed to give my brother, my sister and I a better life.

I was later able to service my community as a police officer for 17 years. I was fortunate to work with many of the fine men and women who serve and protect the people of London. Again I was able to gain a greater appreciation for the community that I lived in by being exposed to sometimes the best and sometimes the most tragic parts of our society. I looked around and saw the greatness that was in our community, our province and our country. Also, I know we can do better. My children and all of our children deserve the best we can give them. They are worth the sacrifices we make for them.

Over the summer, I had the opportunity to meet many of the people who serve in this House, on both sides of the aisle. I appreciate and respect the sacrifices they have made to serve their constituents. I am proud to join them in serving the people of Ontario, and I would like to thank the people of London-Fanshawe, who have given me the opportunity to serve as their elected representative by placing their faith in me.

I'm proud to represent the new riding of London-Fanshawe. London-Fanshawe was created out of the former ridings of London North, London Centre, London South and London-Middlesex. London-Fanshawe is home to various income levels and occupations. We have professionals, such as lawyers and teachers and police officers, along with the many skilled workers, such as the men and women working at the GM Diesel plant. We are also home to a wide range of ethnic communities and their community centres.

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London-Fanshawe is the industrial centre of London and the surrounding area, with large industries such as GM Diesel, Siemens and 3M, as well as many growing enterprises such as the Robert Gordon Co, Grove Packaging and Trudell Medical Supply.

London-Fanshawe is also home to the London Health Sciences Centre, which is one of the finest health care facilities in North America. We are home to the London International Airport, which is becoming an expanding gateway to the world.

I would also like to add to the voices of other honourable members here in the House and welcome my former colleagues, who were in the gallery, from the Police Association of Ontario. These men and women who were with us in the gallery today, as well as the thousands of officers they represent, put their lives on the line every day to maintain safety and security in our

communities, and we owe them an enormous debt of gratitude. These men and women do an incredibly difficult job every day, and they do it with honour and respect for the community around them.

Here in Ontario the police have worked hard to earn respect, especially among new Canadians, to whom the word "police," in their native countries, represented repression and brutality. Police in Ontario have earned their respect and have established a reputation not only here at home but around the world, to the point where many of our officers have been members of international forces sent to foreign countries to teach police services how to do their job and earn respect in their communities.

We must continue to support our police and provide them with the tools to do their jobs better, to protect us all, while providing them with the safest possible working conditions.

As a police officer for 17 years, I understand the fear that many people feel walking the streets in our communities. I have a seven-year-old daughter, and my wife and I are expecting another child soon; I am concerned for their safety. I believe, as this government does, that all Ontarians should be able to walk the streets in their communities and should be able to drive the streets in their towns and cities without the fear of intimidation and without having to fear for their safety.

Policing services from around the province, as well as municipal politicians of all political stripes, asked for help in dealing with the problem of squeegee people and aggressive panhandling. We listened. We went to the public and we consulted, as we did throughout our first term, with community groups and individuals who wanted to work constructively with us to arrive at a solution to this problem. Those consultations led to our commitments in the Blueprint to give police the authority to crack down on squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling. This behaviour jeopardizes the use of our streets.

However, this bill goes even further than our commitments in the Blueprint. We've also included a ban on the disposal of syringes, broken glass and other dangerous objects in parks or any other outdoor place used by our citizens. This is not just a throw-in clause; this is an important addition to the provincial offences. I have often seen these types of objects thrown in schoolyards and parks. Critics may argue that these objects being disposed of are related to more serious crimes which the perpetrators should be charged with, and they are right. But what they fail to understand is that often there is not enough evidence to charge those people with the more serious crimes. The addition of this clause means that legislation will give police one more tool to help them keep our communities safe.

Under this act, the Highway Traffic Act will also be amended to make it illegal for people to enter the roadways and offer commercial services to drivers. This will give police the tools that are necessary to protect the public from those squeegee persons who are causing problems at intersections and attempting to intimidate

drivers who are obeying the law. There is also another safety issue that the act will deal with. Squeegee persons running into traffic are definitely a risk not only to themselves but to others.

The bill will also create a new provincial offence to deal with any kind of soliciting that is aggressive, including panhandling. It would also become illegal to panhandle anywhere that someone would be in a captive situation. This would include a person who could not move away from a panhandler, at an automated teller machine, a payphone, a public toilet facility, a taxi stand or a transit stop, on a bus or other transit vehicle, while someone is getting in or out of a vehicle or in a parking lot.

There are those people out there who claim that panhandling is not a problem. It is a problem. These people target the most defenceless members of our community: the elderly, mothers with young children, as well as others. They will attempt to intimidate them into giving them money. This is wrong. This legislation will give the police the tools that they need to deal with those who prey upon others through intimidation and fear.

People have told us that they have been threatened with physical harm, that they have had their path obstructed during and after being solicited, that they have been subjected to abusive language and that they have been followed. People have told us that they have been approached by people who were under the influence of alcohol or drugs and that they have continued to be solicited even when they have said no. This must stop. This government is prepared to do what is necessary.

This legislation gives the police and the courts a broad range of options to deal with these problems. The police will now be able to give someone breaking this act a warning. They can also ticket the individual and in extreme cases they can arrest the person.

The courts, when dealing with someone charged under this act, will also have a great deal of latitude. They can impose a fine, community service, probation or, in extreme cases, a jail term of up to six months for repeat offenders.

Homelessness is a tragedy that exists in cities not only in this province but across the country and throughout the world. It is a terrible thing and all levels of government must work together to achieve solutions to this problem. Many critics of this legislation have decreed that it is an attack against the homeless. That is simply not true. Many of these people who are squeegeeing and panhandling in an aggressive manner are not homeless. This is an issue of public safety, not of homelessness. The people targeted in this bill are those who seek to prey upon people by using fear and intimidation. Some have continued to try to intimidate the community and government by promising to resort to what they refer to as more serious crime such as prostitution, drug dealing and break-and-enters. These are not homeless, these are thugs who want money that they have not earned and that they do not deserve, taking it from people who often cannot afford to give it up.

I've had inquiries from my constituents concerned that this legislation may somehow affect groups like the Girl Guides selling cookies or volunteer firefighters raising money for muscular dystrophy. I have assured them, as I will assure this House, that this government encourages legitimate charitable organizations and therefore they will be specifically exempted from this legislation.

Police, municipal politicians and citizens told us there was a problem. People do not feel safe walking the streets in our communities. They do not feel safe driving their cars through the streets in our cities. We listened to their concerns. We consulted with community groups and individuals around the province to hear their ideas and their solutions to the problem.

During the election we promised, in our Blueprint, to bring in legislation to protect citizens from squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling. Now we have introduced the Safe Streets Act. This act will give police the tools they need to deal with these problems. That is what being a responsible and responsive government is about: listening to identify a problem, consulting with the public to determine the best solution to the problem and then acting to solve the problem. That is what we have done.

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Mr. R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I am extremely pleased to be able to stand and debate Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act, because it shows a government that is responsible. It also addresses a public concern, a concern of all people, no matter what the age.

I think it's extremely appropriate today to be debating this issue, the week after Remembrance Day. If I look at what has happened on our streets—and I come from a rural community, where maybe squeegeeing and solicitation are not quite as aggressive as they are here in Toronto and the bigger centres but, all the same, they are happening in the rural area—I don't believe that seniors, the older vets, young mothers, children, my grandchildren, should not be able to walk down the streets in this province and feel safe.

I am concerned also for those who are squeegeeing themselves. Certainly this bill is addressing squeegeeing, as it appears, but I'm concerned about their safety. I leave here to go back to Peterborough and go along Wellesley to Church and up, and I see these squeegee people coming out and trying to do the windows. People are getting aggressive in the cars, they are getting annoyed, and the minute that light changes, they are gone. The squeegee people are trying to get through those cars to get onto the sidewalk. I will suggest to you that if we don't change some of what is happening in allowing this and we don't put legislation in place, we're going to have squeegee people who are dead, who are killed on the street corners because of what's happening there. You can't dart in among cars the way they are doing and expect that accidents will not happen.

I also suggest to you that road rage is increasing at these particular stoplights where the squeegee people are basically interfering with the movement of traffic by the people who are using these roads.

I also believe that this type of bill will allow the police in the various municipalities to have some control over what they feel is aggressive or non-aggressive solicitation and squeegeeing, because I don't believe in a big, broad brush for all of this world or all of this province. The situation is much different in Peterborough or in Cornwall than it is maybe in Toronto or London. I believe that the individual police officer and police force should have the right and the opportunity to address them as it relates to those people.

I look at the vets that we just got finished honouring three days ago. They fought to make this country safe; they fought to make this province safe. We have to make sure that what they fought for is going to happen and that their streets are safe to walk down, whether it be, as I said, a senior, a vet or a young mother.

Interjection.

Mr Stewart: They fought for this country, and I would suggest, sir, that when I'm talking about the vets in this province or this country, you should be quiet, because I respect them and it appears you do not.

I would suggest also that this type of aggressive solicitation is not something that we all have to be subject to. Certainly the seniors of this province are afraid, in many cases, to walk down our streets and I don't think that's very right either, because those seniors were the pioneers of this country who helped to build these communities, helped to build this nation. I suggest to you that they should have that right to be able to feel free to walk down the streets and not be intimidated in any way whatsoever.

As I have mentioned, I have six grandkids and I want to make sure that they are safe when they go down the streets. They should have that right to go on those streets without any type of intimidation whatever.

Our community of Peterborough is one of few safe communities in this province and I want to compliment Mary Jane Smith and George Mitchell who headed up that program, along with the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, to make our community as safe as possible.

But you can't make communities safe by words. You have to make sure that there are rules in place that people have to abide by. That's why we have government. Whether it goes back to the Bible, there are still rules that we all must abide by, and I suggest that we do.

The disposal of these dangerous objects in the parks and in the playgrounds I think is despicable. I think that we have to have legislation in place to make people be responsible for themselves, especially for the children and the younger people from the cores of these major cities, where they don't have a place to play, where they don't have places to go to have family picnics, where they don't have places to go to throw a ball around or play touch football. We have to make sure that those parks that they have the opportunity to go to are safe. We have to make sure that those parks do not have the types of objects that would be an impairment to their health, such as the syringes, the condoms, etc. I believe that, again, these are individual rights of people to be able to

use the public places like the parks, whatever they might be.

I believe that people have the right to drive on the roadways, to walk on the sidewalks, to enjoy—and I want to emphasize that word “enjoy”—the public places, to make sure that they are safe and they have security there as well. I believe the police forces of this province have done such a wonderful job—and we've heard about it today—and do have the ability to make those decisions on the spot.

When I think about people being aggressively intimidated, possibly in places like going to a bank machine—do you want to have somebody intimidating you, looking over your shoulder, etc, when you're going to try and do business at one of those bank machines? I don't believe anybody in this House wants that, although there will be criticism being done.

I also want to emphasize the fact that municipalities at the moment don't have any way to make sure that the squeegeeing, the soliciting, whatever—there was an interesting thing the other day. I was walking down a main street—it happened to be in this city—and there was a fairly aggressive solicitor soliciting me and sitting on the sidewalk. About two feet from the top of his head, on the inside of the window, was a “Help Wanted” sign. I wanted to go back and take a picture of that. Here was a person who found it much easier to be part of the underground economy, not to go to work, because in his mind, or their minds—so many people would say there's no work around, yet there was a sign on the inside of the window above where he sat saying “Help Wanted.”

I would suggest, with the type of programs that have been mentioned here in this debate, we are endeavouring to make sure that as many people have the opportunity to work as want to. I suggest to you that this will continue under this government.

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Just a couple of other comments I would like to make: I know there has been some concern, and I've received calls, regarding the charitable groups that feel this is going to make it tougher for them to raise funds. As you have heard from the minister and the other speakers, this is not true. If it happens on the street, then yes. But people should not be on the roadway doing the types of things they could possibly do. I can assure you that the firefighters and the police of this province will not be jeopardized in any way. It's a comment that's being made, and I hold these types of people, the firefighters and the police, in a great deal more respect than it appears people across this House do.

I am pleased to speak to this bill, because I want to make sure not only that the people of this province are protected, but also the people who are involved, much like those people who are doing some aggressive soliciting, as well as those who are darting among the traffic to the possibility that they themselves won't be safe.

I am pleased to have made a couple of comments. I believe this is a good bill and I support it 100%, because in this great province we have to be able to have the rules

in place. We want—and this government is committed to this—to make all areas of this province as safe as possible.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise in support of the Safe Streets Act, Bill 8. While campaigning in the spring election, I met with literally thousands of my constituents. One of the priorities that they expressed time and again was community safety. I'm sure members of this Legislature know that the members of my riding are very hard-working; they're very honest; they have a great work ethic. They've cultivated one of the most industrious and successful regions anywhere in the world. We have large businesses; we have thousands of small businesses. We have a very prosperous area. We have a 4.9% unemployment rate. It is the highest employment rate of any in the province.

So when I talk about the success of my riding, it's not just the riding; it's also the region in which the riding is located, the region of Waterloo, which is one economic unit. All the people in this region are very concerned about community safety. We have large institutions—Manulife, Clarica. We also have large-scale companies—Budd, Babcock and Wilcox, Schneider's. But we also have, as I mentioned before, those thousands of small businesses which will some day grow into medium-sized businesses and large businesses, ultimately. We have all these people who now are obtaining jobs. Their concern first and foremost in 1995 was jobs and the economy. Now these people are looking at community safety.

There are those on the opposite side of the House who will ridicule our government's efforts on squeegee kids. Let me point out that the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, a Liberal member of the opposition, said that a lot of people are fed up with some of these punks. That was reported in the *Toronto Star* on June 21, 1996. The member for St Paul's also said that within a civil society you should be able to walk the streets and not be harassed. That was in the *Toronto Star* on October 2, 1999.

I ask the Liberals, through you, Mr Speaker, how is it that their leader doesn't know this is a problem? We have elderly people who feel totally intimidated by squeegeeing and other aggressive panhandlers. How is it that the Leader of the Opposition does not know that this is a problem in Toronto? How is it that he doesn't know it's a problem in southwestern Ontario? How is it that he doesn't know it's a problem in all of southern Ontario? Doesn't he talk with his fellow members from Eglinton-Lawrence and St Paul's? Does he not also know it's a problem in Ottawa, from whence he comes? I used to live in Ottawa. I lived in Ottawa for three and a half years, and I still have friends down there. Believe it or not, I talk to them from time to time, and I hear that squeegeeing is a problem in Ottawa. It's a problem, but Dalton McGuinty, the Leader of the Opposition, doesn't know it. What that says to me is that he doesn't know what is going on anywhere in the province. Is it any wonder he's got leadership problems?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): But not for long. He won't be there.

Mr Wettlaufer: That's correct: It may not be a problem for long.

During the election, our party promised the voters of Ontario that if we were given the honour of forming the government again, we would address the issue of community safety. In our campaign platform document, the Blueprint, we promised voters that we would provide the means to hire "1,000 new police officers" to patrol our streets, that we would provide "police officers with modern law enforcement equipment." We would replace "aging jails with new, more secure facilities." We also promised to introduce "90 day, on-the-spot suspensions for drunk drivers." We would establish "a zero tolerance policy for unsafe trucks and truckers." We would expand "Ontario's DNA crime lab," making it North America's best such lab. We would provide "increased funding for the independent special investigations unit, so that our police forces" would be "not only more effective" but "more accountable." We would dramatically increase "the number of applications to have criminals, particularly pedophiles, declared dangerous offenders." We also promised voters that we would stop aggressive panhandling and other kinds of aggressive solicitation, such as squeegeeing.

We did that.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): Not with this bill.

Mr Wettlaufer: The member for St Paul's says we won't do it with this bill. I'm also going to quote something else the member for St Paul's said. You said it's going to take some time to get people thinking of the Liberals as a law-and-order party. You said that. You were quoted in the *Toronto Star* on October 2, 1999. Well, we're doing a lot more with this bill than the Liberals could ever have conceived.

Communities throughout Ontario are asking for something to be done to combat aggressive forms of panhandling, and the Safe Streets Act, 1999, will do just that. Squeegeeing is not a trend or a fad like Cabbage Patch dolls, the Hula Hoop or Pokemon. Squeegeeing is an offence. It intimidates the elderly and it has to stop.

1630

This act makes it an offence to unsafely dispose of a condom or needles. We know the problems that causes. We know about the problems that have been attached to squeegeeing. We know about the problems that have been attached to condoms. We know about the problems with AIDS. You people don't understand that. We are doing something, and I am very glad to lend unqualified support to the Safe Streets Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): In response to comments that were just made by the previous speakers, I find it interesting how, as they found welfare to be the hot-button issue for this government in 1995, they found that was the tool to beat up on the poor, now, as we get beyond the 1999 election, this government has

found a new way of beating up on the poor and beating up on the homeless, and that is, of course, through this type of legislation.

Clearly there is a problem in some pockets with squeegee kids, some squeegee kids being rude and aggressive and so on. That's a small part of a bigger problem that we're facing and that these young people are facing. The reality is most of these people are homeless. The reality is most of these people are in poverty. The reality is most of these people have come from very difficult circumstances. So what does the government do? They've got the Rudy Guiliani solution. This is good old New York City. You take the homeless, you take the squeegee kids, you take the panhandlers—anybody who doesn't fit into your mould of Ontario—and just lock them up, throw them away. Maybe you can do what Guiliani did and have the trucks come out in the morning and just pick them right up, pick the homeless people right off the streets at 7 o'clock in the morning before the rest of the world, the rest of New York City, gets to see that. That is this government's approach.

You're obsessed with right-wing, Republican-style issues, and you continue to do that. You've done it with drug testing. You copied Governor Engler. You've taken Governor Engler's approach in Michigan and decided you're going to drug test all welfare recipients because, in your view, all welfare recipients are somehow on drugs or alcoholics. Now you've done the same thing here with squeegee kids. The reality is you have failed to acknowledge the problem.

Let me say to you that the reason we have more homeless today and the reason we have more difficulty with people on the street today is as a direct result of your government's policy. You are responsible, through your actions in the last four years, for putting many of these people on the street, making them homeless, putting them in poverty, and now you come in as though heroes to save the day. What's happening here is an absolute disgrace, an insult to poor people across this province.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): You've got to give credit to the government. They've found a unique way to deal with poverty. Why didn't everybody think of this before? You pass a law against it and you say for anybody who is poor and doesn't have a job, for whatever reason, and finds themselves having to panhandle or go out a wash somebody's window in order to make a few bucks to put a square meal on their table at the end of the day, we'll pass a law and we'll make it against the law and we'll throw them in jail. That's the essential of what you guys are doing here.

I can't believe it. You've got the government on the other side making comments, stupid comments, that someone who is panhandling somehow is not someone who is homeless. Excuse me. Have you taken a walk around the city of Toronto? There aren't too many people living in Thornhill who are out panhandling in the morning or in the afternoon. It's people who are homeless. You guys are living in a dream world and the dream that

you're having is scary; it's a nightmare. Would you guys give your heads a shake? This is political legislation to try to deal with what you see as a political issue, "We want to be seen as the party of law and order." It has absolutely nothing to do with the issue of homelessness, it has nothing to do with the issue of poverty, and least of all, it has nothing to do with law and order.

The reality is that kids are out there squeegeeing—for what reason?—because they are not able to find a job in Mike Harris's Ontario. It's not because they're out there by choice and they have all kinds of other choices to make. People who are out there panhandling are there for very much the same reasons, and I would add, many of them are there because they've been basically sent out of provincial institutions. When we started to depopulate the mental institutions in this province, many of those people landed on the street. Take a walk some day outside of Thornhill and go take a look at what's happening in downtown Toronto.

It is unbelievable that a responsible government in a democracy would come into this House and pass legislation that says basically, "Being poor is against the law."

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'd like to congratulate the Attorney General and other members of the government side for speaking on this bill, the Attorney General specifically in responding to a social problem that has been drawn to our attention by the Toronto police, by the city of Toronto, who have concerns with how they're going to deal with certain social problems.

To the member for Timmins-James Bay, yes, generally, these types of social problems do exist in the urban areas. I doubt if they happen in your riding. I doubt if too much of it happens in my riding. It does occur, and as one of the government speakers mentioned, this bill is about community safety, this bill is about seniors and other persons who are walking down the street and simply concerned with their safety, with being able to walk down, being unobstructed by solicitation or other matters.

It's a very simple bill to read. I recommend that members of the opposition read it. Section 2, for example, says, "No person shall solicit in an aggressive manner." That's all it says. Then it further defines what an aggressive manner is, "'aggressive manner' means a manner that is likely to cause a reasonable person to be concerned for his or her safety or security."

What's wrong with that? What's wrong with putting a law forward to stop them from acting in an improper manner, and acting in a way that will enable people to walk down the street unmolested? The bill is quite specific about other things you can't do and defines more specifically what an aggressive manner is, "Threatening the person solicited with physical harm, by word, gesture or other means, during the solicitation or after the person solicited responds or fails to respond to the solicitation." What's wrong with that?

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): An act to promote safety in Ontario—I find that this government is

a master at appearing to talk about safety. There are fundamentally a lot of issues that are more complex regarding these kids on the streets, and this government is certainly not addressing them in the least.

One of the areas that I see in my own riding is that when it comes to the number of police, we don't have enough placements in police colleges to replace the police who are retiring from the force. That's a real safety issue, because we don't have the people there to protect us when we need real protection, and it isn't from squeegee kids.

Squeegee kids are not a hazard to our society, but allowing dumping of hazardous waste from the United States into prime farmland is a hazard to our society.

Using the squeegee kids as a hot button is really absurd, because locally what has been front page in Sarnia-Lambton is the fact that the volunteer firefighters and professional firefighters who raise money for the Kinsmen, for the Santa Claus parade, stand in the middle of the street to raise money, and it has been stated by members of our police in Sarnia that they will have to enforce the law and they're going to have to ask the volunteer firefighters not to stand in the street and raise money for the Santa Claus parade. So squeegee kids is only a hot button that I believe this government is using.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Responses?

Mr Wettlaufer: The reality is that squeegeeing is a safety issue. Just as recently as this morning, I had occasion to speak with a police officer. You have to understand that this police officer is six foot three and weighs in at over 250 pounds, and he said that he was surprised at how easily these squeegee people approached him at an intersection, asking for money for cleaning the windshield. He said he wondered how many smaller drivers, particularly women driving alone or with their children, felt intimidated into giving money to these people just to be left alone.

We have to address this problem. We have to say to people of Ontario that we respect your right to be able to go to a bank cash machine without being harassed by a panhandler, we respect your right to go into the parks and schools and not be confronted with disposed syringes, we respect your right to be able to approach an intersection without being concerned for your safety, and we respect your right to be able to go into an intersection and not be concerned about your vehicle being damaged.

This is a safety issue. Our government is addressing it, something the other two parties would not be willing to do because they simply do not have the intestinal fortitude.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

1640

Mr Bryant: I rise today to speak to this Bill 8 on behalf of the official opposition. I'm going to be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands, the member for Essex and the member for Hamilton East.

We are committed to safe streets, and I'm glad the members opposite have managed to go through press

clippings and have found a few quotes from a few Liberals saying there what I'm saying here: that we are committed to safe streets. That means providing a myriad of approaches to tackle crime and its causes. That means looking to other jurisdictions in seeing what works. That means no superficial quick fixes, but rather an intelligent, long-term approach to serious and potentially serious threats to safety on our streets.

This bill, on the other hand, represents the height of superficiality. It demonstrates brutal priorities and brutal execution. You can't paper over a criminal justice policy. This act won't work.

Let me deal with each of these in turn; first, the priorities.

We had an election in June, and I don't know what the election issues of the members across from me were, because they seem to be very different from the election issues that I had in my riding. In my riding, the issues were health care, education, housing, and serious approaches to the safety of our streets. Exactly what honourable member had squeegee legislation high on their agenda? Obviously, the answer is none.

None of this is to understate the importance of criminal issues, the importance of the safety of our streets, but let's look at serious issues like the rise of organized crime. That's on the rise, and this government is doing nothing about it. Hate crime is on the rise, yet this government is doing nothing about it. The proliferation of illegal guns is on the rise, and this government is doing nothing about it. Police officers and victims' organizations have told me that domestic assault is on the rise in the province, and this government is doing nothing about it; rather, they're cutting funding to women's shelters. Child pornography is on the rise. We know an increasing number of child porn Internet Web sites are starting in Toronto, and this government is doing nothing about it. We know that deadbeat dads can wander the streets of Toronto—not squeegees, this government would hope, but deadbeat dads—without fear of prosecution, thanks to their famous 1% crackdown rate against deadbeat dads. We too take crime seriously, but we rather would first deal with the priority crime issues.

But let's turn to street crime, because the bill is in front of us, and let's look at serious street crime problems.

The drug trade: This government in its Blueprint committed to reduce the drug problem by cracking down on dealers. Do we have a bill yet from the government doing that? No. Apparently, squeegees are more important than cracking down on drug dealers. This government has done nothing on this commitment.

The Tories also made a commitment in their Blueprint to address underlying social problems such as poverty, illiteracy and drug abuse. Is there anything in Bill 8 addressing this? No, of course not. Has any action been taken by the government? No, of course not. Squeegees apparently are more important.

The most cynical part of the priorities demonstrated by this government is the fact that this bill is taking place

prior to any announcements, let alone amendments, to the Mental Health Act. By its own admission, this government has said that changes need to be made to the Mental Health Act. I sat on a talk show with the member for London-Fanshawe and he acknowledged it, and the honourable Attorney General acknowledged it again today. Yet by failing to introduce legislation dealing with the Mental Health Act prior to passing this legislation, what this government is saying is: "Yes, there are people on the streets who need to be treated. Yes, legislative changes must be undertaken in order to treat those people. But, no, we're not going to do that. We're going to incarcerate those who, by this government's own admission, need treatment, not incarceration." That's bad execution, it's unconscionable, and it's a cynical ploy to appear tough on crime.

By failing to address the causes of the nuisance and the sometime harassment and trespass to property that results from squeegee kids, by failing to address the causes—homelessness, poverty, and whatever turns people to the streets—this government is using the least effective tool to sweep our streets of these people as if they were garbage. The squeegee people and panhandlers are being put in the same bill as used condoms and used syringes, as if they're all garbage that we can sweep from the streets of our cities. As the member for Peterborough pointed out, this is not garbage. These are people. The member expressed some concern about them being killed as squeegee kids on our street corners—a moment of remarkable compassion for the member for Peterborough. As he's suggesting, these are people. You can't paper them away; you can't sweep them away. They'll be back, because this legislation is simply going to shoo them from one street corner to another, as I'll speak to in a moment.

Lastly with respect to priorities, by creating an offence to drop a used syringe, this government not only fails to address the causes of crime or the treatment of substance abusers, not only fails to crack down on crack use, it fails to clean up the effects of this crack and heroine use on our streets, because there's nothing in this bill and there has been no commitment by this government, not a peep, about cleaning up the mess that's left behind after the drug trade and the sex trade has been through a neighbourhood. No, they're willing to crack down on littering syringes and used condoms. Sure thing, Mr Speaker. This government is really tough on crime.

Number one was priorities; number two is execution. The Tories' approach to this problem is doomed to failure. Let's look at what the options are, just look to the offence options. Let's not look at the press release, let's not look at the speeches, let's not look at the photo ops; let's look at the bill. Under the bill there are basically three alternatives: incarceration, warnings or fines, and nothing at all—that's the third alternative.

Let's go through each one.

Incarceration: I can tell you, having spoken to provincial offence prosecutors, Highway Traffic Act prosecutors, and certainly speaking to crown counsel—and of

course a lot of these charges will end up in provincial court if there is another charge tacked onto it—there is no crown around who is going to actually follow through when they have got anything from break-and-enter to sex trade and drug trade and assaults and sexual assaults and attempted murder and homicide. In the scheme of things, they are not going to make this a priority. They are not. By itself, if the only option is incarceration, you can be sure that the prosecutors won't be asking for incarceration. So if they're not asking for it, chances are that neither the JPs nor the judges are going to deliver on it.

1650

If there's no incarceration, then where are they going to go? I'll tell you where they're going to go. They're going to go back on the streets. So that's option 1, incarceration. I say here that it won't happen, and we'll see whether or not it happens.

But let's say it does happen. If the goal is to make these people more productive members of society—and let's be clear, we're not talking about rounders, we're not talking about people who have a long criminal rap sheet. Those people are in a different category; this is not about them. This is about squeegee people. Within that category, the studies tell us—

Forget about the studies. I live in Toronto. I walk down the streets. I ask squeegee kids, "Would you be doing this if you had a choice?" There's an empirical question and we're about to find out what the answer is. How many of these people are homeless? How many of these people are rounders? How many of these people in fact are going to go back to their Rosedale and Forest Hill mansions? That is the urban myth and is going to be proved to be just that. We're going to solve that empirical question in due course and we're going to see whether or not these kids do come back.

But is this going to make them more productive members of society? Is this going to help them get a job? Is throwing them into jail going to help them get into treatment centres? Of course not. Incarceration should be the last resort. Yet it is the only punitive resort under this legislation.

So there is option 1, incarceration which won't happen or incarceration which does happen, and what kind of a sentence are they going to get for squeegeeing? They're going to be right back on the streets.

Option 2 under the act is warnings and fines. In a nutshell, that's just not going to work. It didn't work in Montreal. It hasn't worked in Toronto up until now. Criminal Code offences which permit police to give out warnings have been on the books. Of course warnings aren't going to work, and I'm going to speak to the experience in Montreal in a moment.

In a nutshell we have three alternatives: incarceration and then they're back out on the streets; no incarceration, they're back out on the streets; give them a fine, they're back out on the streets.

I care about addressing this problem and I guarantee you that the way to address this problem is not to push them through the revolving door of the criminal justice

system and then hope that nobody notices when they come back out.

I've spoken about a number of other jurisdictions. I'd like to speak to that and in particular the New York experience, because the Honourable Attorney General made reference to lifestyle offences, which is taken straight out of the broken windows policy propounded by Mayor Giuliani.

So let's talk about what really happened in New York. Two thirds of the number of squeegee people on the streets of New York were removed under Mayor Giuliani. There were approximately 190 of them. They consisted of middle-aged men with fixed addresses and previous run-ins with the law.

I lived in New York for a time pre-Giuliani and I lived for a time post-Giuliani, and I and anybody who has been to the city noticed the difference. But for those of us who were there during Mayor Dinkins's reign, we all remember that most of the squeegee people there were not like the squeegee people here in Ontario; fittingly so, I guess, the Canadian version of squeegee people. Most of the New York squeegee people were rounders, most of them were junkies. Once they went into the criminal justice system, as I'll talk about in a moment, they were sent off to treatment. The approach was not to try and lock up the problem or shoo the problem away; the approach was to deal with the problem.

I just want to make the point at the outset that we're talking about two very different classes of offenders in the New York approach versus the Toronto approach. The reason that New York was a success was because of the Manhattan midtown court project. What happened was they would be brought into the system and the prosecutors would work together, with the judges if necessary but ideally prior to that, to divert them into treatment programs, jobs programs, social agencies. Remember, this is a Republican mayor who is doing this. They hadn't at that point gutted or trashed those agencies, so in fact there were programs to send them to.

Instead of just throwing them into jail, they put them into either the addiction program or the jobs program or if in fact they were mentally ill and they needed treatment, they went into that treatment program. As a result of that, the regulatory system was used as a tool, but there was an understanding that there had to be both a stick and a carrot.

There's nothing in this bill that does that. That's not in the options that are set out under this legislation. Diversion programs are nowhere to be found in this legislation. Diversion programs, in fact, are not used under the Highway Traffic Act, and they will not be used under the Provincial Offences Act for this offence. All we're doing here is that we're taking the first half of the New York experience and using the stick and ignoring the second half, which is what made it effective in diverting them into areas which might actually make these people more productive members of society.

Now let's turn to a Canadian example that worked. In Vancouver in 1998, the city council passed a bylaw to

deal with squeegeeing and panhandling. Council also resolved to work with government agencies, crown counsel, to ensure that aggressive panhandling as well as its root causes, such as drug and alcohol addictions and mental illness, were addressed. City council also resolved to work with business associations on initiatives to address squeegeeing through outreach programs and public education campaigns. This is what Vancouver did. The current police initiatives which are still ongoing involve a voluntary compliance program offering aid and assistance to those who will take it.

Lastly, in Vancouver the policy of arresting aggressive panhandlers under the Criminal Code was explored. They tried it, and then they abandoned it because it was found to be too much of a strain on resources. In a nutshell, the cops wanted to be dealing with more serious crimes when they could be sending out a government agency worker to put somebody into that particular program. That seems like a more sensible approach.

Council finally resolved to deal with the approach using collaborative efforts, including regulation and enforcement, programming directed at the root causes behind the behaviour and public education to better inform the public of the issue. This was their approach, and they have been successful in reducing the problem of squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling on their streets.

Lastly, we turn to Montreal. Here's a Canadian example that didn't work. During the summer of 1998, Montreal cracked down on squeegee kids. The mayor made a promise and the mayor followed through on the promise, just like this government proposes to follow through on its promise to crack down on squeegee kids. So, in May 1998 Montreal was injected with 50 new patrol officers devoted to ticketing squeegee kids, which is more of a commitment, I might say, than we have here in this bill. We have words in the press release about police being shuffled around, but we have nothing in this bill and nothing from the Honourable Attorney General speaking to more police officers being devoted to ticketing squeegee kids. If that's the case, I would question the priorities of that.

The patrol officers handed out hundreds of tickets, the bulk of which remain unpaid to this day. The effect of the crackdown on squeegee kids was simply to shuffle them from one corner to another. This past summer, the number of squeegee kids in Montreal was exactly where it was the year before. Did the Montreal example work? Why don't we ask the mayor of Montreal, who proposed the bylaw, who campaigned on the bylaw and who voted for the bylaw. Guess what? Mayor Pierre Bourque recognized that the crackdown on squeegee kids did not work. The crackdown alone, I repeat, did not work.

The mayor's focus is now on prevention and addressing more significant crime, such as the drug trade and the sex trade, which has increased. I might as well forecast now the lesson the mayor of Montreal learned from the city of Montreal. Bourque agreed that the crackdown on squeegee kids was partly to blame for the corresponding increase on the drug trade and the sex

trade. At the end of the day, the overall problem of dealing with safe streets was in no way effectively addressed.

Why did New York City work? Why did Vancouver work? Why did the Montreal approach not work? Again, it's not only about fulfilling the offence provisions but also what you do with them once you put them in the paddy wagon. I have not heard a thing from the other side of the House, I've never heard a word from the government in all their speeches, today or previously, about what happens after they're arrested. The government doesn't want us to know what happens after they are arrested, because what happens after they are arrested is that they are going to come right back out on to the streets.

1700

As I said, in New York, the Mid-town Manhattan Court Project used regulatory law to divert those charged with quality-of-life offences into social agencies and treatment centres, not prison. In Vancouver, government agencies, business associations, police and crown counsel work together to provide outreach programs to help get the squeegee kids into more productive lives. Either a government outreach worker or a police officer could divert the street kids to the appropriate agency before the charge was laid, because once they've got a record it's going to be that much harder for them to get the job that they need to get their lives on track.

Let's also listen to those who have looked at this problem. The Caledon Institute studied street crime and street problems in Toronto and Winnipeg, and they concluded, "Legal prohibition may sound as if it would be a cheap and easy solution, but the difficult truth is that it would at best provide a temporary cosmetic cover-up." This is what I am concerned about with this legislation: that in fact it is just a cosmetic cover-up; that it is part of a paper criminal justice policy of this government that will have no effect.

This year the SHOUT Clinic Report was released. It was on homeless youth and employment, and it was put out by the Central Toronto Community Health Centres. They went around to the streets and they talked to everybody on the streets in Toronto and in Winnipeg, and they came up with these results. They said that what you ought to concentrate on is nine particular areas, and I'll just quickly run through the list.

They said the government needs to undertake long-term solutions. A low-income housing policy—well, we know that's not taking place under this government.

A policy which addresses increasing homelessness—we know that this government is doing nothing on that, and there's certainly nothing on that in this bill.

Employment training programs—again, it's going to be difficult to put somebody in an employment training program if they're either on the street or in jail.

Returning them to school—that would be a useful thing to do with a squeegee person, to try to get them into school, to try to get them into a post-secondary institution.

Substance abuse programs—government needs to invest in substance abuse programs, says SHOUT, but there's nothing about any of that under this bill, and not a peep from this government on this topic.

Diversion programs—I've already spoken to that. Nothing under this bill is going to permit the diversion of these people into those programs. Certainly no resources are being expended into those diversion programs.

Lastly, community action treatment teams, it was proposed, should be sent out to deal with the mentally ill. It's going to be difficult to send out health care workers to undertake a constructive approach if in fact there are no changes under legislation that would permit them to do that.

One recommendation that the SHOUT report made—and this is interesting, because the government didn't undertake any of those eight plausible ideas, and they actually contradict recommendation number four, in which they recommend that crackdown programs in and of themselves will be ineffective and should not be undertaken unless the ensuing recommendations are proposed. So you may have an argument over whether or not the regulatory approach is the right approach, but at the very least, the regulatory approach without more is doomed to failure and a recipe for disaster.

Where do I get that from? I get that from looking at the Montreal experience, I get that from the studies I just cited, and lastly, I get that from the New York and the Vancouver experience. But this government wouldn't want to look to any other jurisdictions and get a substantive, comprehensive approach because that would contradict their paper policy for the criminal justice system. What would this government care about long-term, effective solutions?

My last point on this bill—and I don't want to move specific amendments; I understand we are here on second reading, problems with the bill in and of itself. This bill is the height of tokenism, the height of superficiality and the most cynical legislation we could imagine to address this problem.

When you look at the bill, and at the definition of "aggressive" under "aggressive soliciting," you may say to yourself, "That sounds familiar." Well, it does sound familiar. It duplicates the federal Criminal Code provision on assault; I think it's section 2(43) of the Criminal Code. Leaving aside the constitutional status of such a move, what more does this provision add if it already exists under the Criminal Code? Well, the answer is that it doesn't do anything and it's consistent with papering over the problem.

Let me say this about the constitutional status: There is no ostensible provincial anchor under the aggressive soliciting section—I'm referring to section 2 here. There is no provincial anchor under section 2. It's a different matter under the Highway Traffic Act; it's clearly a provincial matter. But under section 2 of this act there is no provincial anchor. There is always the potential for constitutional questions, but there's no point supporting or passing legislation when, on its face, before it's even

passed, it clearly doesn't meet the constitutional test under the Constitution Act, 1867. So it's difficult to imagine a more ineffective bill. Not only is it bad priorities, not only is it bad execution, but the bill isn't even going to stand for more than a year under our courts, I imagine. I repeat: There's nothing in section 2 dealing with provincial matters.

It's also so poorly drafted that it may capture private business negotiations. Why would I say that? The only aggressive soliciting I have ever been a part of is in my former life as a aggressive solicitor, and the honourable Attorney General will understand that in business negotiations it is often a tactic to undertake an aggressive approach. Well, there is nothing under section 2 of this act that refers to any of these aggressive solicitations as taking place in public. I looked and looked, and there's nothing under section 2 that requires somebody to be out on the sidewalk or on the street for this to be taking place. I can only imagine the negotiations between the honourable government House leader, the Opposition House leader and the leader of the third party. I have no doubt that they become very aggressive, and that they will be contravening the act. It is overbroad at best, ineffective at worst.

The last point is one that has been raised by the member for Essex that, of course, there are all kinds of absurd hypotheticals that anybody could stand up and make with respect to the overbreadth of this act, and that is the nature of free speech. It is the job of lawyers, in fact, to stand up and do just that. But the problem of Shriners and Odd Fellows and firefighters actually being captured by this act is not a hypothetical dreamed up by lawyers or opposition members. These are constituency concerns that have been called in to members, at least on this side of the House, and that I hope raise a real concern on both sides of the House. If a complaint is made to a police division that there may be a violation of this act on a certain street corner, it would go without saying that the police would be bound to investigate it and we may find that this act is more a hindrance to effective law enforcement than it purports to be.

So we do not support this legislation in principal because at best it won't work and, at worst, squeegee kids will be shoed off the streets around the 416 and moved up to the 905 or wherever they can survive. This is the sweep-it-under-the-rug act, it is the antithesis of an effective, intelligent, earnest approach to a very serious crime problem in our cities.

1710

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): It's my privilege to stand today to speak to this Bill 8 and to add to the comments of my colleague from St Paul's.

I have a copy of Hansard from this afternoon's question period in which the Premier of the province said to my question that it's a "disgraceful lack of confidence" in the police "to use common sense ... in understanding the difference between aggressive panhandling...." While I have the utmost confidence in the police of this province, the problem is that this bill allows—as was just men-

tioned by the member for St Paul's—a complaint to be made by a citizen of the province, and the police then presumably will have to act upon that.

In the few minutes that I have, I'm going to rely on the comments of others; I'm going to rely on the bill itself. It might interest the public in the province to know that in this five-page bill, notwithstanding the fact that the word "squeegee" has been mentioned a number of times during debate, there is not one word in this bill that says "squeegee." So we have to take the bill at its face value and say: "Yes, the law does not discriminate. This bill is to cover everybody. Everybody is treated equally under the law."

Now, the minister himself in question period this afternoon said that somehow or another there was being a misrepresentation under the bill. In fact, I think it was his comments in the opening of this debate that there was a misrepresentation in the bill. In fact, the minister suggested that I read the bill, which I have, several times.

The minister also made a comment today that this is intended to prevent commercial solicitation. He used the word "commercial" a number of times. Well, I've used our handy computers, Minister, and nowhere in this bill can I find the words "commercial" or "commercial solicitation," and that's contrary to what you said this afternoon. So if there is some misrepresentation being made, perhaps that applies to more than just one person in the House today.

When we go to the bill, the definition of "solicit" is very detailed. It means "to request, in person, the immediate provision of money or another thing of value, regardless of whether consideration is offered or provided in return, using the spoken, written or printed word, a gesture or other means."

I raised the possibility today that students standing and inviting motorists into a charity car wash might be considered to be illegal. The minister might well wonder, where did I get an idea like that? Strangely enough, Minister, I remind you that on November 3, as reported in the Toronto Star on November 4 under briefs, under "Queen's Park" it says "Fundraisers Warned," and I quote from the article:

"Volunteer firefighters and other people raising money for charities are being lumped in with squeegee kids under the Harris government's proposed Safe Streets Act. Attorney General Jim Flaherty said yesterday the days will soon be gone when firefighters in small towns can stop traffic to ask for donations or teens can stand at the roadside enticing motorists to stop for charity car washes." In quotes it says, "They will have to obey the law."

When it comes to obeying the law—

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: The minister is chirping over there. I'm only going to use—

Hon Mr Flaherty: Read the quote.

Mr Crozier: I read the quote, Minister. I'm only going to use words from the bill and I'm only going to use words, quotes, from other individuals.

The bill also goes on to say that "roadway" has the same meaning as under the Highway Traffic Act. You've explained that. It goes on to explain what a vehicle is, which includes automobiles, motorcycles, vans, trucks etc.

There are five or six definitions of a captive audience. In this bill it says, "No person shall ... solicit a person who is using, waiting to use, or departing from an automated teller machine." Well, leading up to Remembrance Day in my home town of Leamington, there was a Legionnaire standing at a bank machine collecting money for poppies. Under this bill, I can see no other explanation but that if you're soliciting someone waiting to use or departing from an automated teller machine, you would be in contravention of this law.

Also, it says as one of those six areas, "No person shall ... while on a roadway, solicit a person who is in or on a stopped, standing or parked vehicle." I refer to section 177 of the Highway Traffic Act: "No person, while on a roadway, shall stop, attempt to stop or approach a motor vehicle for the purpose of offering, selling or providing any commodity or service to the driver or any other person in the motor vehicle."

The minister tells us that charities need not be concerned, but the law is the law. So what do charities have to say about it? Jim Parent, president of the Goodfellows in Windsor, says, "If that becomes law, it would kill us." This was in the Windsor Star, Friday, November 5. And when it comes to a question of whether this can be treated with some understanding, some compassion, some common sense, I only quote from Staff Sergeant Dave Rossell, a spokesman for the Windsor Police Services: "We can't pick and choose which laws we want to enforce and those we don't. We may be put in a position where we'd have to enforce." That was in the Windsor Star Saturday, November 6, 1999. They're not my words. They're concerns of Staff Sergeant Dave Rossell. These are concerns of Jim Parent, president of the Windsor Goodfellows. I've had expressed to me back in my riding the concerns of the firefighters, who have raised tens of thousands of dollars for the burn unit at Metropolitan General Hospital. They're their concerns. We know that there are people out there who are going to complain, if for no other reason than to cause mischief, if for no other reason than the fact that—they weren't threatened, they weren't intimidated, they weren't even stopped perhaps, because most of these are done when the signal light is red—simply, they want to see this law, which the minister says applies to everybody, enforced.

The office of my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton received a call from the mayor's office in Sarnia. It seems that the government's new law prevents the local Kinsmen club from shining car windows on street corners to finance the local Santa Claus parade, and the member for Sarnia-Lambton brought that to our attention.

If squeegee kids are the problem—and my colleague from St Paul's has outlined a number of issues that apply to them that this bill certainly won't address—why, then,

would this government write a bill that can apply to every other group in the province that ever enters on roadways?

It would appear that one of their own members, from London-Fanshawe, has already, as he said this afternoon in the Legislature, assured his constituents that groups such as the Brownies selling cookies and firefighters collecting money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association will be specifically exempted from this law. But my problem is, it's not in the law. The law that we're debating today has absolutely no exemptions. As has been said, everybody's treated equally under the law. And as the minister himself has said, they will have to obey the law.

I ask the minister to look at this piece of legislation. It's badly drawn for the objective you have indicated you want to accomplish. Look at the law. Allow some amendments when it comes to committee. If you're not going to do that, just withdraw the law and go back and make one that, as my colleague from St Paul's has suggested, is effective, that does the job you want to do and that does not attack charitable organizations in the province.

1720

Mr Agostino: I rise along with my colleagues to speak to this bill. I think my colleagues have clearly outlined the weaknesses of the legislation and the areas of the legislation that are unworkable, unenforceable and, frankly, make much of this bill quite useless.

I want to speak for a few minutes on the approach this government has taken in dealing with this problem, the reality of the situation, the people who are affected by this bill and really what has been this government's lack of action in trying to deal with the serious, underlying issues that have forced many of these people into the situations they are in and have become the focus of the attack of this government.

Poverty is a significant factor with people who are homeless, people who are panhandling, people who are working at the corner, the squeegee kids. When you look at the stats, the research that was done by the addictions research foundation of Manitoba found that 85% of panhandlers had failed to graduate from high school. There are about 200 squeegee kids in Toronto. They are mostly homeless individuals ranging from the early teens through the 20s. There are some exceptions, but that is the majority of the group affected. Research on homeless youth over the past decade has found that these kids were often victims of sexual, physical and mental abuse at home. Some were involved in petty crime, and drugs and alcohol were also a factor for many of these kids.

The reality is that by passing what I would call this American-style, Republican law or approach to dealing with a serious problem, the government is failing to deal with the underlying causes that force many of these people out there. If you listened earlier to some of the speakers on the government side of the House, you'd almost think it was a career choice they made. I'm sure the squeegee kids choose to be at a street corner in the middle of the winter, in freezing temperatures, running

out and cleaning a car window. I'm sure that's a career choice most of those people make. Somehow government members lead us to believe that these people pack up their tools at the end of the night and go home to some suburb.

Mr Bisson: They go to Thornhill.

Mr Agostino: Thornhill, as my colleague says, or maybe some actually get in their Mercedes and drive off to Rosedale for the evening.

You make it look like it's a career choice, that somehow people choose to live that way, somehow people choose to be homeless, somehow people choose to be poor. If you talk about careers, this government has made a career of picking on the most vulnerable, poorest people in our province, and this bill goes along those lines.

I don't see anything in this bill that talks about programs to get mentally ill people off the streets. I don't see anything in this bill that talks about finding accommodation for the homeless, beyond simply the shelter network, through affordable housing. Where does this bill deal with that? In what you have done, where are the increased programs to deal with these people? Once you round them up and throw them in jail, and then they come back out, I guess you'll just throw them in jail again. Maybe the new superjails you were talking about will be filled simply with homeless people and squeegee kids. That's the best way; nobody sees them then. You said you'd fix the problem, just like you fixed the problem with welfare by changing the rules and forcing hundreds of thousands of people from the system on to the streets. You fixed that problem in your mind as well.

This is typical of how this government approaches problems, and you of course continue to try to score cheap political points at the expense of others. Yes, there are some aggressive squeegee kids. I think we've all seen it. But I can tell you that the vast majority of times when I've been at a stoplight, they come, they ask, you wave them away and they move on. In the last five years, I think my car has been done once without me approving it. In most cases, they're not rushing out there, threatening and intimidating you, threatening to break your windshield, break your antenna and smash in your headlights. Maybe it just happens to Tory members, I don't know, because you seem to be the ones having these problems all the time. Maybe you're out there inciting it.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): They have signs in their cars saying, "We hate squeegee kids."

Mr Agostino: Maybe that has something to do with it. I just find that you have taken this and you're saying that the perception is much worse than the reality here, and you're going to score some political points on it.

But again I ask you, how does that deal with the issue? How does bringing this law into place now that will force you to jail squeegee kids or homeless people if they persist in being squeegee kids or persist in being homeless—again it's this choice they've made. How does this deal with the underlying problems that are

there? How does this deal with the potential mental health problems many of our homeless face? How does that help? You haven't been able to answer that. How does it help the young person who's on the street, has no home and this is their only means of survival? What are you going to do? What alternative have you put in place? Absolutely nothing, which is typical of how this government approaches a serious social issue.

I suggest that if this government were serious about dealing with the problem—yes, you need legislation for the few who are aggressive, and yes, you may need legislation for the few who intimidate people. That is not the case for most of them. On the other hand, you've got to, then, come in with programs and spend some money on programs that are going to help these people.

You talk about resources. We had police officers here today, and it was pointed out clearly in the House how there are actually fewer police officers working on the streets of this province today than there were when your government took office. You're the big law-and-order guys. You're the guys who talk about law and order all the time, the big, tough guys, and you actually have a situation today where there are fewer police officers working the streets of Ontario than there were when you took office. Now you're going to take even those limited resources that are there and you're going to spread them out even further. You're now going to force police officers to respond to complaints about squeegee kids at maybe half a dozen or 10 or 15 corners in Toronto.

Again, you're going to stretch those limited resources. Where's the announcement tied up with this bill that you're going to bring the hiring level of police officers not only up to where it was five years ago but also increase it to reflect the increase in population we have had in this province in the last five years? I have not seen any of those announcements.

We have again with this bill an example of this government reacting the way their Republican friends in the United States advise them to. Michael Murphy not only consulted for the campaign, but I'm sure he consults with you in between campaigns to tell you what the hot buttons to push are. As I said earlier, you pushed the welfare button in 1995. You then copied Governor Engler's proposal in Michigan for welfare drug and alcohol testing because you found not that there were a disproportionate number of problems in that area but because politically it pushed a hot button. It was a winner for you. It doesn't matter how it hurts people. It doesn't matter how it stereotypes people. It doesn't matter how you label people by your programs. It doesn't really matter, because your pollsters tell you that it's good politics to do that. Your American pollsters tell you that it works in Michigan and it works in New York so, darn, it has to work in Toronto.

This is how you deal with pressing, difficult social issues: You push hot buttons, and you go after people who are vulnerable. Chances are that most of the homeless, the panhandlers and the squeegee kids—I don't think there will be 10,000, 1,000 or even 200 of them

protesting outside the Legislature—are not going to be able to hire one of those expensive lobbyists who works the corridors of this place to lobby the minister on their behalf. Somehow I just don't think squeegee kids, homeless people and panhandlers are going to quite be up to doing that to change this law. They're likely going to be unheard in all of this.

But government has a responsibility to protect the poor, to protect people who are having difficulty and to help people who are having difficulties in life, and you've chosen not to do that. You have chosen to take a hammer. You have chosen to make it—again, another example of a crime, to be poor in Ontario, and you've chosen an approach that frankly is not going to work. It has been tried in other jurisdictions the way you've done it, simply with the legislative end and the big law enforcement end, without the support, and it hasn't worked. And it's not going to work in Ontario. You're simply going to move the problem around. You're simply going to put more people in jail because they happen to be poor. You're going to marginalize folks even further in society.

This bill is a disgraceful way of dealing with a real problem here and once again I would say to this government: Do what is right to help people. Do what is right; don't simply continue to beat up on people, to beat up on the homeless, on the welfare recipients of this province and on people who need your help. You have a responsibility to do that and I suggest to you that you have failed miserably with this piece of legislation.

1730

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): As I sat here listening to both the Attorney General and the members from the government side and to three of our own members, I was thinking to myself: "Here we are. In the last 11 months we have been in this House, I believe, for a total of less than 15 days." Seven days last April and May, and this is our third week. We have four legislative days a week.

Mr Wettlaufer: And we're still hearing the same thing from you.

Mr Gerretsen: He's saying, "And we're still hearing the same thing from you." But isn't it really sad, with all the problems that we have in this province, that the government regards this piece of legislation as its flagship legislation as we go into the next millennium? I think that's really a shame. I really and truly believe that, when there are so many other problems out there that we should be dealing with in a very constructive fashion.

When we see the ever-expanding difference between the haves and the have-nots in our society, increasing at such a very rapid rate, we are dealing with—and, I'll grant you, this may be a problem to some people here in Toronto. There may be one or two squeegee kids, or maybe even three or four, who are too aggressive in stopping motorists and what have you. The Attorney General well knows, as has already been pointed out by my colleague from St Paul's, that there are laws on the books right now that can deal with that matter. There are

Criminal Code sections that can be used right now. But somehow we're dealing with a situation that, to my way of thinking, is marginal at best when you think of all the other problems that we could be dealing with at this time.

I have respect for this Attorney General. I believe that he means well and he's well-intentioned and dedicated to his job. But he's got two major problems in his department that have been festering now for the last three or four years and my question to him is, why isn't he doing something about those two problems, the first being the Family Responsibility Office?

Let there be no mistake about it: It is much more than whatever computer problems we heard about today in the House. This is an office that has been troubled right from the very beginning, starting about three years ago, where people are paying money in support into our court systems throughout this province. Women, mainly, and children who depend on that support money aren't getting it out on the other side, where at times they have to wait for two or three months. Now, that is a real crime. That is a real crime, when the women and children of this province rely on the support money and they're not getting it.

We just recently had a meeting in Kingston, and a couple of members from the third party attended there as well, Mr Kormos and Ms Martel, and we heard from people over and over again, and each one of us hears from people over and over again in our own constituency offices, about the problems they have had with this office for at least the last three years. And nothing is being done to resolve it.

As a matter of fact, I have one staff person who spends half her time in just dealing with Family Responsibility Office situations. These aren't situations where people aren't paying into the system. No, somehow the money gets lost in the system and it's not coming out at the other end. Why doesn't he spend his time and energy dealing with those problems?

The second major problem that's out there—and this isn't the sort of problem, the kind of situation we talk about in this House on an ongoing basis—but how about the legal aid funding? Speaker, you and I know that the number of legal aid certificates that are issued in this province are about a third of what used to be issued four or five years ago. What does that mean? I know there are some people at home right now who are saying: "Well, that's right. When you get charged criminally, you're on your own and you don't need a certificate. You look after your own representation, and if you can't afford it, that's just too bad."

Mr Bisson: It works for the rich, not the poor.

Mr Gerretsen: That's right. The system works for the rich but not for the poor. If he was really committed to doing something in his department to make sure that everybody gets equal treatment before our judicial system, he would be doing something about the amount of legal aid funding that is put into this province.

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. A point of order, member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: On a point of order, Speaker: I believe the debate is on Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act. I haven't heard very much about that in the last five to 10 minutes—

The Acting Speaker: I am certain the remarks will turn to the Safe Streets Act.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I always find it very interesting that this member and some other members opposite used this same tactic in the last House. Whenever they hear somebody talk about the real issues of Ontarians out there, they quickly try to divert it and say, "You're not talking about Bill 8." Well, there's nothing in Bill 8, sir, that isn't already covered in the criminal law. There's absolutely nothing to talk about, and you know it as well as I do. It is all just about hot button, push-button politics. Somehow you think that some of the people of Ontario may be looking for this kind of legislation, when you should be telling the real truth and that is the fact that the situations you intend to deal with in Bill 8 are already dealt with in the criminal law of this province, sir. So, yes, there are many more important issues that the Attorney General and this government should be dealing with.

How about the question of doctor shortages? The former Minister of Health said here the other day that we don't have a doctor shortage problem but the problem we have is a distribution problem. Tell that to the hundreds and thousands of families across this province who are trying to look for a family physician in small towns and large towns, in rural areas and in big cities, who aren't able to get a family doctor. Why don't you deal with that problem?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Why didn't you, when you were here?

Mr Gerretsen: They keep saying, "Why didn't you, when you were here?" First of all, it wasn't this kind of a problem back in the mid-1980s, and secondly, people really don't care what happened 10 or 15 years ago. They want you to deal with the problems that are out there right now, and how you are going to fix those problems. Those are the issues that we should be dealing with.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kitchener-Centre will come to order.

Mr Gerretsen: Why don't we do something about the real problem of the homeless? A lot of these squeegee people, as you call them—you don't call them "squeegee kids" anymore, which is kind of interesting. A lot of these squeegee people are homeless. Why don't you do something about their problems? Why don't you?

I blame the federal government just as much as the provincial government in this. Both of you have decided to go out of the housing business completely and you're downloading it onto local municipalities. You know and I know that affordable housing will not be built in this country without a substantial amount of input and resources from both the federal government and the provincial government. I challenge you right now to match the amount of money that the homeless situation is

getting from the federal government. We all saw the news media reports—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): They haven't got it, John. They haven't got it.

Mr Gerretsen: Just a minute now. We all saw the news reports last Friday that federally there is a plan about to be announced for \$700 million. That would translate to Ontario as roughly, I would say—we usually get about a third of the total federal amount of money, so that would be a program of over \$200 million that the feds are prepared to contribute to the homeless situation in the province of Ontario.

Are you, Madame Minister of Education, since you have so much to say, willing to commit the province to \$200 million as well and match the federal contribution?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I did it last year. You weren't listening.

Mr Gerretsen: The minister said she did it last year. Well, I haven't seen any of the new supportive housing being built. I haven't heard any of the announcements being made. As a matter of fact, we all know that you are all talk and no action.

Why don't you fund, for example, in my own home community the Kingston youth shelter, which is a shelter set up to take the homeless youth who got to be homeless for whatever reason, it doesn't matter? They're out in the streets right now, in the middle of the winter. Why don't you fund that project?

1740

Hon Mrs Ecker: We have.

Mr Gerretsen: You don't even know what I'm talking about, Minister. Would you please listen for a moment?

The Acting Speaker: This is best done through the Speaker.

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, Speaker. She said she just gave them money.

You didn't give them any money, because they were closed for six months, and it's only through private donations and with the help of the Hotel Dieu Hospital in Kingston that they are open right now. I'm challenging the government to give enough funding to make sure that the Kingston youth shelter will have enough money so that it can shelter the homeless youth during this coming winter.

Why don't we talk about the real issues that are out there? There are so many other issues that we could be talking about. For example, how about getting some money back, Minister of Education, for educational assistants so that those children who need the help of educational assistants in their schools will actually have that help and not be given 0.6 support so that in effect they're only supported for two thirds of the time or even less than that?

Mr Bisson: I'd like to make a quick comment on the comments made by the Liberal caucus. I note that the Tories were booing that, but I think they really did miss the point. At one point the member for Northumberland got up and said that somehow or other the comments

made by the honourable member had nothing to do with the debate. I think they don't get it. It has everything to do with the debate, because what you guys are doing by way of this legislation is trying to deal with the effects of poverty rather than dealing with the causes. Rather than going out there and promoting policies that deal with how we try to prevent poverty in our province so that all people are able to get a fair share of the pie, you guys are saying, "Let's go make a law that makes it illegal to be poor in the province of Ontario." That's basically what you're doing, and you're attacking the effects of what is happening when it comes to poverty. That's what this government is doing.

First of all, let's be realistic, because it was said earlier in the debate that the government for the last five years, since they came to power in 1995, have been wearing as a badge of honour all of the attacks that they have made on the working and the working poor and the people who are poor in the province of Ontario. You've gone out and you've attacked people on welfare. You've gone out and attacked people who are in housing programs. You've gone out and attacked people by way of cutting rent control legislation. You've gone out and attacked workers when it came to legislation that gives them the ability to negotiate fair and collective agreements. Time after time this government has chosen sides, and they are with the rich people of Ontario. They're not with the middle class, they're not with the poor, and that's why they're bringing this legislation to the House. They know their policies don't stand up, so they come in and play the politics of crime. They want people to believe that somehow this is going to make your streets safer. Well, it's not.

The reality is, kids are out there with squeegees for what reason? Because for them, there isn't a golden job that Mike Harris talks about. People are panhandling why? Because the work isn't there and in some cases because they are outside of mental institutions that you've depopulated, and what you're trying to do is make laws that make it illegal to be poor in Ontario. I find that reprehensible.

Mr Galt: I was certainly very impressed with the member for St Paul's tremendous theatrics in his presentation, but poor content.

The member for Kingston and the Islands would get top marks for being off topic. It's obvious, when he was so far off topic that he didn't want to address the bill and it's very obvious that he enthusiastically agrees with it.

He talked a lot about affordable housing. I think he forgets that we're spending \$2 billion a year on affordable housing, which works out to \$750 for a family of four. You just ask how many in Kingston with a family of four want to pay \$750 to help with social housing.

I don't think there is any question but the responsibility for affordable housing lies with all three levels of government. The member for Kingston and the Islands might first ask the federal Liberals what they're doing, and secondly, as mayor of Kingston, what did he do in the early 1990s for affordable housing in Kingston? I don't think he did anything and he may tell us in the response.

Many of the speakers from the official opposition made reference to service clubs and volunteer firefighters. I too was concerned about this and certainly questioned and read the bill. Certainly there's nothing there, if they're not in an aggressive manner and they're not out there after a captive audience, that's going to interfere. Yes, the minister said "must obey the law." That's true of all of us. These people can still wave cars over along the side of the road.

I think what really insulted the Legion members was the member from Essex saying that they were there for profit. I can assure you the Legion members were not there distributing poppies for profit, and you said "for a profit."

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Ms Churley: Mr Speaker, I—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: No, no it's okay.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Broadview-Greenwood. Order.

Ms Churley: It's a pleasure to be able to get up for a couple of minutes and talk about his bill. Hopefully, I'll have an opportunity later on to, as we continue with this debate, to say more.

I'm glad that some of the Liberal members brought up housing. It certainly is very much a part of the bill that we're talking about today, because the Tories continue to talk about sweeping the streets clean of poverty, but they're not talking about any of the solutions to why people are there in the first place. I think that people are more willing to look at the law and order side of things when they see a government taking seriously its responsibility to all the people of Ontario and making sure that there is housing there for those who most need it.

I will say to squeegee kids and panhandlers and other people who are homeless and who are suffering from poverty, largely because of the policies of this government—when they ran and won in 1995 and now they're continuing with this—that one thing that should be of comfort to them is that this is mostly smoke and mirrors. It's going to create more paperwork for the police, it's going to create more paperwork for the courts, but at the end of the day, there's not going to be much action out there in terms of sweeping the streets, the kind of thing they want to get done, and they know it.

It's like workfare. They get up with their smoke and mirrors on workfare and say, "Oh, we're creating all these jobs," and in fact they're not. We know that. It's in the public domain that it hasn't worked. They are doing the same thing with this legislation. It is smoke and mirrors to give the impression to their friends, their universe, that they're actually doing something. They know that it's smoke and mirrors just as well as we do.

Mr Hastings: It's interesting to listen to members for the official opposition in terms of their being so dismissive of the bill.

First off, the member for St Paul's says that it's a cosmetic cover-up and there really isn't a problem here with these squeegee folks ranging all the way from—I've

seen them from age 12 up to at least 39 or 40, depending on which part of the city of Toronto perhaps and some other parts of Ontario. Certainly they are there. Some of them are very respectful of the motorists, but I can tell you, I've had personal experience with them, as have lots of members of the public. I'd had lots of people from my constituency call up and say: "Would you please deal with this particular situation. These people are not courteous, not respectful. They are threatening." For these folks over here to stand up and say there's really not a problem just continues to show an example of perpetual denial.

They claim that this is an attack on the poor and the vulnerable. If it were an attack on the poor and the vulnerable, I'll tell you, the previous regime that was in had a really classic attack on the poor and the vulnerable. They took 30% surtax on earnings—get this—of \$8,000 in 1993-94, practically confiscated people's income. No wonder we had people out doing squeegeeing, because of your policies of the previous government. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. You're also supporting being champions of civil disobedience. Shame on all of you for that.

1750

Mr Bryant: I've heard mischaracterizations, but I've still heard nothing from the other side of the House about what happens after the squeegee kids get arrested under this act. What happens next?

I said in my comments that they're going to be sent right back out on to the streets or that they're going to be incarcerated, and neither alternative is going to work. I said this is a problem that needs to be addressed more effectively. But all I heard from the other side was something about our suggesting this is not a problem. So let me be clear.

We want the streets of Toronto to be safe. We want to tackle this problem. But we cannot support a piece of legislation which is going to be ineffective, which represents brutal priorities, which is going to be struck down by the courts because it's so poorly drafted, which is nothing but smoke and mirrors, and which does nothing to address the problems of street crime in the cities of this province.

Lastly, I cannot believe, after so much has been said on this side of the House about what happens after they get arrested under this legislation, that not one member will stand up and say: "Here's what's going to happen. We're going to throw them in jail or we're going to throw them right back out on to the streets." That would be a responsible response to this debate, and then we'd know exactly what the alternatives are. But they won't do that because they don't want us to notice that either people are not going to be rounded up at all and this legislation is just going to sit on the books because nothing is going to happen, or there's going to be a temporary crackdown for a few months and the police will go out and arrest. But they're absolutely hoping we won't notice that a year from now the kids will still be on the streets, because this legislation does nothing to

address the issue of street crime in the cities of this province. So we cannot support it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This bill is so replete with contradictions and ironies: This whole concept of criminalizing what for most people is but annoying behaviour, the whole prospect of using jail and incarceration as a way of responding to what is, at its heart, an overriding social and economic problem.

I'm sure many folks here are probably far better travelled than I am. But in totalitarian countries, communist countries, panhandlers were swept up by the police and shooed away, because the totalitarian regimes wanted to present themselves to the world as being full of equality and fairness when it came to distributing food and other wealth.

I understand. I read the legislation that grew out of Mayor Giuliani's street-sweeping exercise in New York. Some of this is much akin to it.

It's ironic that this chamber consists primarily of middle-aged, middle-class people, and our minimum wage is seventy-eight and however many thousand dollars a year. That's the minimum wage of a member of the Legislative Assembly. The vast majority of members make far more than that minimum wage. Here we are talking about panhandling and living on the street and having to squeegee at an intersection to put a couple of bucks in your pocket, when there's not a person in this room who could say with any—I won't say honesty—could say with any candour that they have endured that for more than perhaps a fleeting moment. We're as middle-class and as middle-aged as any group of people could be, and here we are talking about a problem and an issue that's totally alien to us.

I'll put to you that this is quasi-criminal legislation, because it means people go to jail. There are arrest powers contained here for police officers. It means that people can be dealt with by way of incarceration. Surely there's got to be some assessment of the proportionality of the thing that you want to end and the process by which you want to end it. Criminalizing annoying behaviour—I understand that some people may well find panhandlers and squeegee kids annoying. I find the Canadian Home Shopping Channel annoying, yet I'm not suggesting that any Legislature would ever see fit to outlaw the Canadian Home Shopping Channel.

The fact is that down where I come from, in Niagara Centre, this bill and panhandlers and squeegee kids were not the topic of conversation over the course of this past weekend, and I would suspect that held true for most of Ontario, even the greater part of Toronto. At the end of the day, I read, and I'm sure I've read the same stuff you have, that there are maybe 400 squeegee kids, if that many, here in Toronto and some other large cities—I'm told Ottawa and London, Ontario.

We're told of the potential for criminality by virtue of them being there out on the street, yet not one single example has been given to us of a criminal offence committed by a so-called squeegee kid in the course of

pursuing that windshield to wipe it clean. Urban mythology, that's what it is. We've heard all the stories about old people getting their cars keyed, scratched along the side, windshield wiper blades broken off etc. I haven't seen or heard or read of a single prosecution. That is a criminal offence. If that sort of thing occurs, there should be criminal intervention and criminal prosecution, and if a person is guilty there should be a conviction and an appropriate penalty.

While we talk about the proportionality, we also have to talk about the enforceability. No Legislature in its right mind would pass unenforceable legislation, because all that does is reveal it to be mere lip service, smoke and mirrors. Mere lip service.

When the bill was introduced, because the bill is really three parts—I want to explain to you, Speaker, I'm going to have a lot more time to finish discussing this. There's an hour of leadoff time, except we're obviously going to have to break at 6, and I'm so grateful to my team-mates in this strong NDP team here, this caucus, for allowing me to use that lead response time. The fact that I was critic in this area was, I'm sure, somewhat helpful too.

Let's talk about enforceability. We have three major sections here. In one, you're talking about panhandling; two, you're talking about squeegee kids—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: That's precisely what you're talking about. In three, you're talking about the disposal of syringes, condoms and broken glass in public areas. We made reference to it on the day the bill was introduced, in response to the minister. Enforcement is going to be a real problem. The fact is that a street junkie or crackhead isn't thinking about whether or not he or she is safely disposing of that syringe when they toss it into an alleyway. All the provincial offences acts in the world aren't going to persuade that person not to get rid of that syringe as quickly as possible, and the fact is also that they tend not to do it in eyesight of others. Do you understand?

Disposing of a used condom—and I want to reiterate my great sympathy for police officers who are going to have to retrieve the evidence and examine it sufficiently so as to testify that it was used. Indeed, as a defence lawyer one might be inclined to ask, "Used for what, Constable?" If the police officer offers that response, you then go on to ask him, "How do you know that?" I

suggest that enforceability of the disposal of new or used syringes and used condoms and even broken glass is close to nil, close to a bare zero.

The fact is, do I want, do you want, does our citizenry want police officers engaging in, let's say, surveillance? Because that's what you've got to do to bust this kind of stuff. And surveillance is one of the most expensive forms of policing because it requires huge teams of police officers. There can't be any gaps. There has to be continuity, sitting in an alleyway watching for a condom to drop when all sorts of other stuff is going on in every one of our communities and it's going on because police officers aren't out there on the streets in sufficient numbers.

The fact remains that if a junkie or a crack user or a methamphetamine user throws away a syringe that was used for one of those substances, one would like to think that our police are more interested in retrieving the evidence and having it tested so that person can be prosecuted under the new version of the Narcotic Control Act. I don't look forward to the day when encumbered crown attorneys and federal prosecutors are using this act—think about this, please—to make deals, to plead down to a mere disposing of a syringe when we have a serious drug problem in this province and in this country that warrants some very significant intervention.

The contradictions: I started by reading the definition of "aggressive manner." I wonder if the Attorney General has paid heed to the whole argument that will be made, I'm certain, about the usurpation of federal jurisdiction, because I also took a look at the definition of "extortion" in the Criminal Code of Canada, and quite frankly this bill's interpretation of aggressive manner to obtain something, to wit money—"aggressive manner" means a manner that is likely to cause a reasonable person to be concerned for his or her safety and security"—hold on just a minute, Speaker—the parallel of the definition in the Criminal Code.

I'll continue next time this bill is passed. I'm sorry I couldn't include all my comments this evening. I appreciate your patience. There's a whole lot more to comment on—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1802.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATA

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)
10	371	2	16

In issue L-10, substitute "McLellan" for "McClellan" at:

Should read:

Christopher Stephenson, this piece of legislation

page 371, column 2, line 25; page 372, column 1, line 41;
page 372, column 2, line 4; page 377, column 1, line 9;
and page 379, column 1, line 25

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100-103
No. 11B



Conservation
Projet de loi
N° 11B

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of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 15 November 1999

Lundi 15 novembre 1999

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 novembre 1999

The House met at 1848.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAXPAYER PROTECTION AND BALANCED BUDGET ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES ET L'ÉQUILIBRE BUDGÉTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 4, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 7, An Act to protect taxpayers against tax increases, to establish a process requiring voter approval for proposed tax increases and to ensure that the Provincial Budget is a balanced budget / *Projet de loi 7, Loi protégeant les contribuables des augmentations d'impôt, établissant un processus d'approbation des projets d'augmentation d'impôt par les électeurs et garantissant l'équilibre du budget provincial.*

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'm very happy to continue with our presentation of the week before last dealing with this very essential taxpayer protection and balanced budget bill.

We were talking back then and the opposition members had entered the debate regarding this particular bill being—I believe the member for Beaches-Woodbine referred to it as “smoke and mirrors” and “another one of the sham bills.” We've heard that kind of expression of criticism from members opposite.

But when we look at the members of the official opposition, this is a party that is supposedly going to support this legislation, in the sense that they understand the concept at least because they see the trend that has occurred over the last 40 to 50 years in this country, and that is essentially that taxpayers are really tired of footing the bill and not getting fundamental value for what they pay for.

There is no doubt that if you look at the record of provinces in this country, the federal government itself, prior to the last few years, and particularly since Paul Martin, their finance guy in Ottawa, got the idea that we should run to balance the budget—up to that point in time, Ontario had been a leading exponent of high deficits and even higher debt. We had run it up to at least \$100 billion by 1995.

Earlier, some provinces, Saskatchewan in particular, had started to see the light of day about 1993, when they started to balance their budget. But the member for Hamilton West the other day, in this particular presentation, mentioned that Saskatchewan was a leading agent in balancing the budget. That's true, but do you know how they did it? By again raising taxes at about every level. That was the secret way in which they balanced the budget. So if you look at Saskatchewan's record of corporate income tax and personal income tax in the mid-to early 1990s, they had one of the highest tax rates.

What was the effect of that? All you have to do, since they believe Statistics Canada is a very viable agency of record, is look at their outflow of Saskatchewanites to Alberta, Manitoba or British Columbia. They were losing population back in those days. That has changed slightly, but the real fact is that the deficits of the previous PC government had contributed to their taking action. But their form of action, unlike ours, was to raise taxes.

That's the nub and core of the problem for the opposition in both parties, particularly the NDP, because they are really believers—at least I have great respect in that regard—of higher spending, higher taxes. If you have a problem, all you have to do is increase those taxes. The record shows it, particularly when they gained government in 1990-91. What did they do? They explained their circumstances, that they were in an economic recession. There's no doubt that's true, but if you look at the record of the previous governments across the world that had looked at the economic thinking of those days, when you increase your taxes, at whatever level—and I don't care, whatever level of income tax they are paying, the marginal rate—you are going to drive those people to other, lower-tax jurisdictions.

More proof of that couldn't be found than with the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, the finance critic for the official opposition. He has argued consistently over the last number of years that the only reason for the boom in this province is because of the export phenomenon to the United States, and that's true as far as it goes. If you stop there, that is the record. Our automotive parts industry, our automotive industry, is the key driver of the Ontario economy. But you have to ask yourself another question, which members opposite fail to carry through when they think about this logically. Why were we exporting so many goods and services to our American trade partner, aside from it being our closest neighbour? Because all you have to do is look at the tax jurisdictions around the Great Lakes—Michigan, Ohio, New York,

and federally in Washington. Their taxes generally are lower. Obviously, if you have a lower tax level in any of those states and federally, what's going to happen? You're going to allow citizens of those particular jurisdictions to have more money in their pockets and to choose how they are going to spend it, save it or invest it.

The believers across the way, faint believers as they are in this whole bill, demonstrate that if they were here they'd still be doing the same thing they did in the 1985-90 regime.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Balancing the budget.

Mr Hastings: Balancing the budget, the member for St Catharines—yes, actually that's a story in itself. They did balance the budget for about 90 nanoseconds, but when you look at how they balanced it, like Saskatchewan's NDP did when they balanced their budget, they increased taxes. In that particular Nixon budget of 1989-90, one of the major contributors, as we presented in our previous thesis on this whole bill, in causing the recession of the early 1990s was the commercial concentration tax.

What did that do to the economy of this province? It put it into a huge tailspin. Yes, they balanced the budget briefly but we paid an awful price, starting with that year, 1990. I was in local government and we pleaded with Mr. Nixon not to bring in this tax.

What was the commercial concentration tax? Aside from being a direct invasion into property taxes at the local government level, they said, "Phooey, this isn't going to have much impact on anybody; we're going to tax parking lots and all other adjacent facilities in commercial facilities." They did it, and guess what happened to our unemployment rate. It went up, not down.

I don't know how much evidence is required for members opposite, whether it's the United Kingdom in terms of its lower tax regime, not just in personal income tax but in capital gains tax. Economists today no doubt will argue and present facts that when you have a high capital gains tax, high corporate and personal income tax rates, you drive away investment. There is no doubt in my mind that if we need more investment in this province, all you have to do is look at what is happening in Las Vegas this week at the huge computer show called Comdex.

Of 2,000 exhibitors in the high technology industry—and that's only one of the sectors that would be helped by a lower tax regime; it can occur in all economic sectors—you have about 100 Canadian companies, maximum, that are down there showing their products. The rest of them are from other parts of the world. Why haven't we got more Canadian companies like Newbridge Networks, Corel and Nortel? Why haven't we got larger companies like that, employing lots of people in well-paying jobs, not ones that the opposition sneers at when you have low, entry-level jobs at seven or eight bucks an hour? There's no doubt in my mind that when you have a lower tax regime, you create future revenues for government services, particularly for vital ones like health and education.

Let me elaborate on a couple of other themes that members opposite often talk about in their mantras. We just heard from the member for St Catharines—and you'll see this in certain sectors of economic thinking—that yes, we could have a little bit of tax relief at the lower end. But in point of fact they don't even believe in that.

I want to quote something I came across from a very good publication, and I know that a lot of members opposite don't regard it as such. I'd like to quote momentarily from Linda Leatherdale, who's the business editor of the Toronto Sun.

Interjections.

Mr Hastings: See what kind of sneering attitude they have, especially the member for St Catharines? She has a little story here about a person who works for the Toronto Sun in the distribution chain who pointed out that after the reductions in tax of 30% by the Ontario government over the last four years—a mailroom clerk earns just under \$30,000. When he looked at his pay stub after we had those income tax rates reduced from 58.5% down to 40.5% what did he find? This particular individual ended up with \$800 in his pocket.

But guess what. The folks in Ottawa really don't believe at all in tax reduction because they believe that once the money has left your pocket it belongs to M. Chrétien and the folks in Ottawa, for them to spend. It has been documented in treasury bills presented that they want to spend nearly \$100 billion of our money—unemployment insurance, personal income tax rates—over the next five years, because they do not believe whatsoever that the money earned by people in this province and across the country is their money. Once it has passed through your pocket, it becomes the bureaucrats' in Ottawa.

What happened to the mail clerk in the Toronto Sun mailroom when he looked at his stub afterwards of the \$800? He hardly had anything left of it. No wonder people today wonder where the tax dollars have gone, because the Canada pension plan will have huge increases coming forth by 2003, going from about 4.9% up to nearly 8%. The EI reductions have been so slight that you'd hardly think they'd have an impact on the economy.

1900

What we need today is even more tax relief than what this province has offered. We need Ottawa to really bite the bullet and reduce unemployment insurance benefits significantly, money that belongs to the workers of this province, to the employers. We need a significant reduction in the capital gains tax to keep people from going to those things like down in Las Vegas, to the United Kingdom, to other parts of the world, because if you don't have these wealth creators here, you put even more tax on the folks who are left, particularly at the low-income level. There's no doubt—and my colleague from Wentworth-Burlington documented it very well—that one of the key things of the previous NDP regime that was a fundamental attack on the most vulnerable was this

30% surtax on \$8,000 of earnings. Think about that. That means that those people are getting taxed double, maybe triple, depending on their individual income circumstances.

Let me end by pointing out that the fundamental benefits of this bill are to bring real protection to the taxpayers of this province, to bring about a state of affairs whereby we do have balanced budgets into the future, whereby we do not have politicians who are addicted to the continual tax-increase, tax-spending methodology we've had over the last 50 years. It creates more problems rather than less.

We need more investment, more jobs for people. All you have to do is look at Dr Mundell's advocacy of the changes in economic thinking and budgeting we need today, particularly when you look at the 30% income-tax rate that he talks about in the literature. We don't need higher, because if we did, we should never have accumulated or had any of the problems we ended up with over the last 20 to 25 years. The Keynesian model of economic thinking is finally dying, I hope, because it's not the way to the future. That's the way to a dead-end, high-tax regime with higher unemployment. Surely to goodness the folks across the way would get that through their thinking. The Keynesian model doesn't function any more. If it did, then we should have assumed an economic state of affairs back in 1995 where the unemployment rate was down to nearly 2% to 3%. What was it? It was 10% to 11%. So I think we have the best legislation—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions? The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I want to thank you and compliment you, first of all, on your re-election to the position of Deputy Speaker, member for Perth-Middlesex. You always do an outstanding job, in my view, in that position.

This was a predictable speech by the member from Etobicoke North, who, in his angry way, tells us that all previous governments were evil and the present government sees the light and, somehow, that this province is booming because of all the policies of this government, when in fact any objective observer would conclude that this province is booming for two reasons: first, the booming American economy. You should be sending Bill Clinton a letter of thanks for the booming American economy, because Bill Clinton, despite the Republican Congress, has kept the economy going in the US. Second, the member should also be sending a letter to the federal finance minister, thanking him for lowering interest rates. Remember, when his pal Brian Mulroney was in power—the man he used to support when he was in Ottawa—interest rates were sky high. No wonder we had a deflating effect, not in terms of deflation, but an effect which was very adverse on the economy because of those interest rates. So we have a low dollar—it makes us competitive in Ontario; it makes us attractive to investment and to purchase goods from us—we have low

interest rates both in Canada and the US, which make a huge difference, and we have a booming economy.

We can remember that when the recession was here in Ontario before and the Far East was doing well, British Columbia was booming. British Columbia isn't now, because of course they are subject to conditions in the Far East. But I'm always interested in the member's comments.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It's always, I would say, entertaining to listen to the member across the way trying to take credit for everything that is supposedly happening that's positive in the economy.

I just want to pick up on the comments made by the member for St Catharines. There are a few things that have happened in the Ontario economy over the past number of years; that is, we've been basically following what's been happening in the States when it comes to the growth that you've seen in that economy. If you take a look across the country, to be objective, and you look at the economy through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, you can almost follow on a graph that we've tended either to benefit or to fall back, depending on what's happening on the other side of the border. For the member to stand up and say, It's all our government's doing, that we are doing so well is a stretch.

The other point is that of the balanced budget legislation on which he's trying to espouse his views. The reality is that we still have a deficit in Ontario. This government, quite frankly, has a deficit after five years of being in power for a very simple reason. Yes, they made a choice. They said they were going to give a tax break at the very same time that the Ontario government was trying to balance its books and basically come in with a balanced budget.

What business puts itself in the position of doing what this government has done in spades? My argument would be that what they should have done was to carry on what we were doing, which was to try to manage down the cost of government, making sure that programs are there for people in the end, and only deal with the issue of a tax break at the end should you find yourself in the position of having a surplus.

What the government is trying to do is to have it a little bit both ways. Quite frankly, I think we're paying the cost of that. We'll see with time what happens, because time always tells in the long run who was right. On this debate, I tend to think this government is going to be found to be wrong when it comes to the longer term of what they're doing.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Compliments to the member from Etobicoke on an excellent presentation. He mentioned supporting more tax cuts to stimulate the economy even further than has happened here in Ontario. He's just dead on there. He talks about more investments in the province of Ontario, and that's exactly what's happening here with the stimulation to the economy and the tax cuts that have been carried out.

He talks about more jobs. In the month of October, 43,600 net new jobs brings us to 610,000 net new jobs

since we came into office—well, 615,000 since the throne speech in September 1995. You'll notice we were on such a downward slide taking over from the NDP that we actually lost some jobs when we first took office, so there is a discrepancy there of some 5,000 jobs that slipped as we were turning that Queen Mary around in the Toronto Harbour.

It's interesting, the comments that came from the member for St Catharines, who talks about sending a letter to Mr Clinton to thank him for the economy. I'll read to him what came out in the Toronto Star, the Liberal Star. This was last Wednesday, November 10. Big headline, front page: "Economy Booms for First Time in Decade." The sub-headline: "Growth Powered by Ontario Will Outstrip United States." Now, that has to be absolutely right if it came from the Toronto Star, and you'd have to agree with it; I don't think there's any question whatsoever.

Secondly, he had to say that the federal government is what stimulated this. I would suggest to him that the only reason the federal government have balanced their books is because of the stimulation of the economy here in the province of Ontario. If that hadn't occurred, plus the cut in transfer payments to the provinces, I can assure you they would never have balanced their budget. That's what's been leading their balanced budget, certainly not the moves of the federal government.

1910

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): This government taking credit for economic prosperity is like a rooster taking credit for the sun rising. It is extraordinary, during these times of economic prosperity across North America, that this government has joined the province of British Columbia and the province of Quebec as the only governments who have still failed to balance their budgets.

I ask this government about their priorities. This government has decided that it was wiser to raise the debt by \$20 billion than to balance the budget. This government decided, notwithstanding the fact that trickle-down economics had been disproven and laughed out of every reputable economist's classroom over 10 years ago as a result of the failure of the Reagan revolution and the rise of the debt and the eventual rise in unemployment, to undertake trickle-down economics. But even worse, they decided to undertake trickle-up economics, such that they would punish those in our society who could least afford the economic punishment, and expect them to pay the bill.

I'll give you a quick example: the gutting of the child care subsidy to all those claiming that subsidy under RRSPs. The fact that these people who most need the subsidy are now being asked to collapse their RRSPs and spend that money instead of responsibly saving it means that those who can least afford it are being asked to sustain the economy, which is the reverse logic that is currently operating and running this government's irresponsible fiscal policy. We're happy to finally see in writing that we're in fact going to get the balanced

budget, and we look forward to hearing more on this from our friends on trickle-up economics in the future.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Etobicoke North has two minutes to respond.

Mr Hastings: I listened with great intent to the remarks from the member for St Catharines, first off. He's mentioning that Mulroney did a lot of things that were bad, but I have to remind the member for St Catharines that in point of fact the high interest rates that we had back in the early 1980s, 22 per cent as I recall—20% for the so-called Canada savings bonds—who was in power federally? The Liberals. Why? Because the deficit was ballooning then, thanks to our friend M. Trudeau.

To the member for St Paul's, I'm somewhat surprised that even he, as a member of a profession, seems to profess the point of view that if you had higher taxes, everybody'd be better off. If that's true—let's think about it—why did we have any problems? We should have had prosperity galore back in those days when we inherited what the NDP were trying to do. Even the member from Timiskaming-James Bay makes a very interesting point that at least by the end of their regime they were trying to manage their programs—except they didn't have the leadership in many of the ministries to do that. The intent is admirable, but when you look again—he says, "Lower taxes have nothing to do with it." If that's true, why didn't we have a booming economy from 1990 to 1995? We didn't; we had the reverse. We had job loss. Why weren't we getting more investment than what they crowed about back in the 1995 and 1999 elections?

It's just so fundamentally a premise that when you leave more people with more dollars to spend, save or however they want to choose, the citizens will make good choices. What happens usually is they go out and buy, they get a house, they get a mortgage, whatever it happens to be. It doesn't end up in the hands of the bureaucrats, at least.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: I look forward to participating in this debate and adding a few comments which I think will be very relevant, straightening out some of the misconceptions which have come from the other side of the House.

I want to say, first of all, that the people at home should know that until this session began, this House had sat only seven days—seven days of so-called democratic debate. Then the government didn't come back at the normal time in the fall but decided to come back well into the month of October. Now they sit in afternoon and evening sessions because they want to rush their legislation through, and the public should know that. I know the media don't care about that, so you don't have to worry about them writing stories about it. They yawn over things like that because it's not exciting; it's not something that's startling. But I think the public at home should know the kind of contempt that this government has for the democratic process.

It's interesting as well that at long last, now that the government thinks it might balance the budget, it's going to pass budget-balancing legislation which requires

governments to balance the budget. Isn't that convenient, as they used to say on Saturday Night Live with one of their characters.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It's good strategy.

Mr Bradley: The member for Brampton North or South—

Mr Spina: Centre.

Mr Bradley:—Centre now, he says—says, "It's good strategy." It might well be clever strategy, just as I watched a strategy unfold this afternoon. The government demonstrated very early in its second term a lot of arrogance and condescending attitude this afternoon, I thought.

They will think it's clever. You see, the people back there will tell you: "We were really clever today. We had the police in the gallery and we had all these lob ball questions and made all these announcements." The Premier looked pretty smug today. I don't make personal remarks about people, but the Premier, who some days is jovial in here, today looked pretty smug. I noticed that the officers applauded some of what was said this afternoon, and I was wondering what the reaction would have been in the government benches if it were a group of poor people up there, somebody who wasn't a friend of the government, applauding at that time, whether we would have entertained that applause as quickly. I always look at the standards that we apply for all, and I like to see those same standards applied for everybody.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): Are you criticizing—

Mr Bradley: What the member from Scarborough knows is that I'm more pro-law-enforcement than he is. You won't find anybody in this House who is more for security in our communities and for more police officers on the front line, on the streets. I notice, Mr Speaker, as you probably did, that there are actually fewer police officers on the streets today under a Conservative government than there were under an NDP government, and they accuse the NDP of being anti-police.

I know when I speak to officers from my area tomorrow who come to speak to me, they'll be interested to know how much I think will be allocated for more officers so they can carry out their responsibilities appropriately. I'll be sharing some insights with them on that occasion.

What happened with this government, why it didn't balance the budget a couple of years ago, is quite simple: They decided instead that they were going to give out tax cuts. Some of the new members may not know that there was a debate within the Tory caucus, people I disagree with sometimes, but pretty good heads when it comes to thinking about what's best for the province. There were four or five members of the caucus who publicly said, "You know, we should wait until we balance the budget before we implement tax decreases." That was smart, because it would have meant there would have been less of an addition to the debt.

Now, \$21 billion additional debt came onto the books when Mike Harris and the Conservatives were in power. I'm a fair-minded person. Do I say all of that was avoidable? No, I don't. But a good chunk of that was avoidable, and it's because the government went out to borrow money to give a tax cut, which to even conservative-minded people in this province—I'm talking small-c now—made no sense.

I remember Dr Joseph Kushner, economics professor at Brock University, a person known for his frugality when the public purse comes along—sometimes referred to as Professor Negative, Dr No, Frosty the No Man—just advanced a motion at city council last Monday night that they have a zero tax increase. He put forward a motion, supported by the council, which asked the provincial government not to implement its income tax cuts until it had balanced its budget, not to borrow money and add to the provincial debt.

I remember the Dominion Bond Rating Service, certainly not a bastion of Liberal or socialist theology, was critical of this government for in fact increasing the debt and said that the tax cut would cost money. Virtually every credible economist said that. Oh, you had one or two people who were trotted out and talked about tax cuts, just as now the National Post is leading the charge for tax cuts, aided and abetted a bit by at least the editorial board of the Globe and Mail—the National Post, owned by Conrad Black, who owns 58 out of I think 103 or 104 newspapers in Canada and is bleeding those newspapers, in my opinion, the local newspapers, to feed the National Post so it can become the top national newspaper somehow. They have led the charge. You've got Diane Francis and the other right-wingers, Terence Corcoran and others who will put forward this argument that really is an argument in favour of the rich.

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If you have no social conscience and you're very rich, there's no way you could vote in this province other than for Mike Harris and the Conservatives, if you fit those qualifications—or for the Reform Party federally. I wouldn't say the Progressive Conservative Party federally, because I think there's some conscience in the federal Conservative Party and some semblance of concern about those who are at the lower end of the scale, although it depends on who you talk to in the caucus. I think there's some of that in the leader and in others. But that's what you get. That's whom you'd vote for. You couldn't vote for anybody else under those conditions.

I've heard about the fiscal responsibility of this government. I go to the chamber of commerce meetings. They would say, "We've got to lower that deficit." I'd say, "Sure do, I agree with you." Then they'd say: "You know what we have to do? It's important that we pay down the debt." I hear nothing from the right wing today about paying down the debt. It's as though someone went "Presto" and the debt disappeared. Well, it's still there. I believe we should use some of those funds which will be available to pay down the debt in a progressive way and also to reinvest in programs that need reinvestment. Of

course, that would include health care and education and other areas.

Members will recall that the last surplus we had under a Conservative government I think was 1969 and the last one under a Liberal government was 1989. In the period in between we've had a lot of deficits—we have—but some of them are more avoidable than others. Some said you must pay as you go; if you're going to have the new programs, then you have to implement the tax regime to do it.

The government members now always mention certain tax increases under other governments. They don't mention the tax decreases, for instance a massive removal of OHIP premiums that hit individuals the toughest. That's what hit individuals. The rich people could afford them and the people who were lucky enough to work for employers who paid the premiums were OK. But there were a lot of people at the lower echelon who were hit hard by that regressive tax called the OHIP premium, and they eliminated the OHIP premiums in this province.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member mentions, "They did it for the rich." He doesn't want to say—you know this, Mr Speaker, very well. The Tories don't go around telling their rich friends, "What about?"—what do you call it?—"the fair health tax" or something. It's got a name like that. They don't mention that at the Tory fundraisers. I'm told that fair health tax has not been mentioned at one Tory fundraiser.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I have reports from people who go there. I do. They go there and they report back to me what happens. Actually, if you give them the \$500 to go, they report back to you. That's what happens to those.

I want to say as well that under our Liberal government there was a AAA rating on finances. This government has never had a AAA rating. They keep hinting they hope there's going to be someday, but the Liberal government had a AAA rating, the one the member for Etobicoke North made disparaging remarks about.

I've counted up 673 tax increases that this government has implemented.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: I know these members are going to say, "Where on earth did you get those figures?"

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if we could ask the member to table those 673 tax increases that he says he has counted up. We would be very interested in seeing those.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Bradley: I will be happy to do that in due course. But I want to say now that I counted them on my fingers, my toes and everything else, and there were in fact 673 tax increases. You'll say, "How is that?" They are the user fees that we've seen implemented in Ontario since Mike Harris took over. Even the hunters and the fishermen and fisherwomen in this province were people who

got hit with these increases. The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters probably put out a press release condemning that. I didn't see it. I just missed it, probably, because I know they would have put one out criticizing that and I'll be asking about that. So you're taking money away from them, for instance.

People who want to have their kids play hockey now, you should see the fees they have to pay locally. Why is that? Because this government downloaded on to municipalities all kinds of new responsibilities. The member for Scarborough-whatever will want to tell me—because they all changed after the election. I'll know them a couple of years from now.

They dumped \$18 million in additional financial responsibility on the regional government in our area, so the local business people got together, because you people also fiddled around with the taxes, the tax assessments, and they were angry. You would have been happy because they blamed the local government. I had to inform them, "Look, it was the provincial government that dumped \$18 million in additional responsibility on the local governments." There was some uploading and downloading, but the net difference was \$18 million negatively. The regional government will tell you—I'm totally independent in this—that is the case. So they had to raise taxes, cut services once again or implement fee increases, user fees, which as we all know affect the poorest people the most. Rich people can afford it. The people who tinkle the glasses together at the Albany Club, where all the rich Tories go, they can afford these user fees, but the people of Simcoe county, who don't get to go to the Albany Club, are people who are concerned about those kinds of increases.

We talked about the economy, and I'm going to go back to that for a moment. Look, do you want to know why we're doing well in Ontario? There's the National Post; the member for Niagara Falls has it. He must be an ideal hug of the right wing because he is holding up what they consider to be the Tory bible, political bible, that is, and that is the National Post, owned by his friend Conrad Black.

The US economy was booming. Ontario did well because we do a lot of trade with the US. The interest rates were low in Canada. Prime Minister Chrétien said that we needed low interest rates to help our economy, so we got low interest rates—those low interest rates help this government in paying back their debt too—low interest rates in the US, a low dollar here, a competitive dollar here, and the result is a booming economy in Canada, particularly eastern Canada, and Ontario, which does most of its trade with the United States.

Some of the right wingers will say: "What about British Columbia? That must be those socialists out there." What you have to remember is that back about 1993 BC was doing quite well. People said, "Hey, they're immune to the recession." Why? Because they do a lot of trading with the Far East, and the Far East was doing well. Today, because of a downturn in the Far East, BC is not doing well. I'm not here to defend the NDP

government. I'm just telling you that you have to understand that to be the case.

What we're seeing under this government is a diminishing of services provided to the public. Again, the very rich don't care about that but average citizens do; for instance, ophthalmologists in the Niagara region. You're now placing a cap on ophthalmologists. What does that mean? That means you're going to force elderly people to travel down that Queen Elizabeth highway, which is never a treat to drive on, to get services for their eyes, to get their eyes treated by ophthalmologists who are several miles away, sometimes an hour's trip away.

What we need in Niagara is for you to lift that cap which is on ophthalmologists. First of all, we have only 13 ophthalmologists when even the ministry says we need 14 full-time people. We have 13, some of them part-time. You're punishing the people, and why are you doing that? Because of your obsession with yet another tax cut, so you've got to find all of these additional savings.

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Dr Kushner, whom I made reference to, said—and he's a conservative economist—"The combination of a tax cut and significant cuts in expenditures is in fact contractionary." Any economist who isn't going to a Tory fundraiser will tell you that. He may even have gone to a Tory fundraiser. I don't know that.

We have the situation with our ophthalmologists. Our hospitals are running deficits. Why? Because this government is not providing sufficient funding for those hospitals to provide the kind of services that are needed. Meanwhile, you're off wanting to give away another tax cut. Look, most people I talk to say: "We don't want another tax cut. We want you to reinvest in a strong health care system." And I'll applaud you if you do so, but you're not doing so.

I want to say as well that the environment has suffered by this government cutting what percentage?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): It's 45%.

Mr Bradley: The member for Hamilton East says 45% of the budget is cut, 40% of the staff, somewhere in that ballpark anyway, and therefore that ministry's not able to do its job as well.

There's also the issue of clogged highways all around. I would hope the government would decide to extend its GO train services down in St Catharines and Niagara Falls, for instance, well past Scarborough out into eastern Ontario, into western Ontario, up into the Georgetown area. I think it would be very good for us to have those services, yet the government is cutting back, doesn't even provide money for public transit in areas of the province as it used to for the local authorities.

So we get into another issue. You want to force restructuring, as you call it, on the Niagara region. I want to tell you flat out, I'm opposed to your scheme for one big region. You want one big everything. You know, in a world where people feel alienated and helpless by globalism, where huge corporations have more power than

individual governments that represent people, the last thing they have is their own community.

The member for Wentworth-Burlington no doubt agrees with me. I'm on his side in this issue. Some of my own colleagues don't, but the member for Wentworth-Burlington agrees with me and others who understand that individual community is important and that these huge units really don't save money. I know the Tories like them because the rich people get elected to them more easily. You have to run a big-time campaign, lots of money—not the wards, not the small units, and the Tories tend to do better there. The boys in the backroom, the whiz kids, say: "This is smart stuff. We should force this restructuring, force one big region across the province."

Some areas may want it. If they do, so be it, but the areas that don't, don't force it down our throats, because what you have now is—you must smile at this—you have the people anticipating it and so they're saying, "We better amputate ourselves at the knee because if we don't, Mike Harris is going to amputate us at the hip." I'm saying: "You don't need an amputation. You're fine as you are. Be efficient. Do a good job. Provide value for money—that's what people want—and keep that local community that we need." The member for Wentworth-Burlington and I are going to carry on this crusade in favour of maintaining those local units.

The last thing I want to talk about is one place you people are taxing very heavily, and that is gambling. You've snuck your new Mike Harris gambling halls, which were going to be the charity casinos, into the racetracks now. You put all these slot machines in the racetracks so that people, instead of watching the races, are out playing those mindless slot machines, throwing their money away on that, money that could be spent more productively in our economy. In another speech I'll get into a full rant on that.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I enjoyed that speech, to the member for St Catharines, as always.

I don't know if the member for St Catharines has heard, but Preston Manning, the leader of the Reform Party who, as you know, is a good friend to many in the Conservative Party here, is holding a contest to find the Canadian who is being most ripped off by the tax system. Does the member for St Catharines know that? I would suggest that we hold another contest to find the big corporation that's getting the most benefit from tax breaks and tax benefits. That would be a good contrast to that.

I'm glad that the member for St Catharines gave a reasoned analysis of what is really going on in a global economy. No wonder people are so cynical about politicians and partisanship and political parties when we hear members from the Tory caucus get up, time and time again, and crow—to continue with the barnyard analogy that the member for St Paul's came up with earlier—and take credit for everything good that's hap-

pened in the economy and then blame every other party in every other province, other than their own, for all the ills that happen over generations, it seems.

That ain't the way it works, and people are wise enough to know that out there. It ain't that simple, and believe me, I am not hoping for or wishing for a recession. God spare us from that, because we know the havoc it wreaks on people. But I tell you—talk about the chickens coming home to roost—when and if it happens while you're in power, you're going to be in trouble. God help the people of this province if it happens while you're in government.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): I really enjoyed the member from St Catharines speaking. Last time he was very consistent, last term. He basically said, "You guys are borrowing money for the tax cut and cutting programs to pay for the tax cut." He said it was about \$10 billion that we're borrowing, referred to cutting of the programs and ignored the reality in the budget that in fact our revenues were going up each and every year to the point where now we're getting \$6 billion more after the tax cuts than before. At least in the last term he was consistent. He was wrong, but he said, "You're borrowing \$10 billion and you're cutting government programs to pay for the tax cut."

This time he's taking a different tack, and I don't mean any disrespect, but at least last time you were consistent. Today you spoke of 673 tax increases of the Tory government. The member for St Catharines spoke the last time, the last day we were here, on November 4, and what did he tell us then? Did he say 673 tax increases? He said he has counted them all up. No, he didn't. He said 567 tax increases. That's 106. He said has found more. Was he right back then? Was he right today? He was off by \$6 billion last term. Where's the truth? Perhaps he should look at his colleagues. What do his colleagues say about these debts and deficits?

Let's look at Mr Crozier, the member from Essex. At page 313 of the Hansard, on November 2, he told us that the NDP increased the debt by \$12 billion and the Liberals increased it by \$5 billion. Was that right? No it's not. In fact, Mr Gerretsen, who spoke a day later—in Hansard at pages 413 and 414—told us the actual fact is that NDP increased the debt by \$47 billion and the Liberals by \$10 billion. The member from Essex was off by \$35 billion; the member from St Catharines is only off by \$6 billion, so I congratulate him.

Mr Agostino: I'm pleased to add to the comments made by my colleague from St Catharines. As usual, I think he has outlined very clearly the case with this government's agenda and particularly as it relates to the backdoor tax increases that this government has imposed.

It's amazing. The members across stand up and talk about this economic boom. As my colleague Mr Bradley did say, a great deal of it has to do with the American economy, and a great deal of it has to do with the great work done at the federal level by Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin.

The reality is you sit here and you take the credit when the jobs are growing, but look at my own community in Hamilton in the last couple of years: Procter and Gamble, in the city for over 95 years, shut down and moved that plant to the States; Case shut down and moved their operations to the States; Camco announced the other day that over the next two to three years there will be 200 jobs lost. Again, not once did I hear the Premier or any of the Tory members stand up and take responsibility for that and say: "You know what? Yes, it's our fault. We have something to do with that."

You can't have it both ways. You can't stand up and take all the credit for all the jobs that get created in Ontario but then duck the responsibility and the blame when there are job losses as outlined here. It would take some courage to stand up and do that.

1940

Look at what you've done with downloading. In our own community again, over \$30 million a year that you have shafted us out of in regard to your downloading exercises. You've forced user fees on municipalities. You've forced the hospitals into deficit situations.

The reality is that the biggest myth in this province is the fact that somehow people think you're good money managers. At the end of the day, what you have done to the deficit in this province since you've taken office is a disgrace. You have failed to address that while at the same time you've given tax cuts to your wealthy friends and the deficit continues to balloon year after year.

You're good at spinning, you're very good at spinning, and your spin is out there, but frankly people are not going to be fooled much longer by your continual spin.

Mr Bisson: I just want to pick up on a point by the member for St Catharines, and that's the one of user fees. I think that's where he was trying to go when he was being heckled by the government side in regard to all of the tax increases. I know he's going to come back to the House shortly and point out all 637.

I look across my municipalities, across the riding of Timmins-James Bay, and I see exactly what the member is talking about. Yes, the Conservative Mike Harris government delivered on a 30% tax cut to taxpayers across Ontario. That's the record, that's the truth, that's what happened. But there's been an offset and a cost to that. The cost is that this government is still running a deficit, unlike most governments across Canada. Most provincial governments have managed to balance their budgets and put themselves into a surplus situation, along with the federal government, by saying: "We're not going to give tax breaks while we're trying to balance our budget. We will deal with trying to manage the costs of our programs to be able to balance our budgets, and only after that are we going to take a look at giving people a tax credit."

That's one cost of the tax cut. But what we're seeing on the other side is all the darn user fees. I went to the arena last weekend, actually, and watched one of my neighbour's kids who was out playing hockey for the first time this year; he asked me to go out. He was bemoaning

the user fees at this club the kids are having to pay because of the reductions that the government has given in municipal transfers.

Have you gone out and taken a look? You go down the street, you talk to another of your neighbours, you talk to somebody who has been in contact with the health care system having to pay for things in health care that you've never had to pay for before. Schools and universities: I was talking to one individual in North Bay this weekend, in Mike Harris's own riding, who bemoaned how much he has had to pay to help his son get through college in the last couple of years.

So yes, you may have given them tax cuts but it's cost us both by not being able to balance the budget and by way of user fees.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for St Catharines has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much for the comments of all my colleagues. I think we have discovered through their comments that this government is first in line to take the credit, last in line to take the responsibility. When there's something to take responsibility for, their hand goes in a 180-degree direction and heads towards Ottawa or it might go over to this side of the House, to one of the previous governments. I wouldn't mind if the government accepted the responsibility.

I thought when the member for Wentworth-Burlington got up he was going to agree to join my crusade to protect smaller communities. I know he just didn't have enough time. I remember before he was a parliamentary assistant, when he was an independent-minded individual who spoke what his heart really said. He would have said that at the time; he would have been agreeing with me at that time. However, I know there's some remuneration. That doesn't make any difference, but it's the responsibility that goes with it that has tempered his comments just a bit.

I want to say as well that my friend Peter Partington, who is a regional councillor, a former Conservative member for St Catharines-Brock, introduced a resolution at regional council which in effect was pretty critical of this government over its taxation policies as they relate to local government. I agree with Peter Partington and I'll stand four-square with him in his criticism of this government. He's certainly an independent voice. In fact, you would expect he might agree with this government, but he's fair-minded enough to call it as it is.

You wondered why the figure's gone up. Every day I count a new user fee and the figure keeps going up. I'll give you an update.

The last thing I want to say is, you would realize that the Olympic rowing should be in St Catharines and not in Toronto. So I know all of you on the government benches will be prevailing upon the government to have the Olympic rowing in St Catharines.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I always get a kick out of the member for St Catharines. He always manages to get a little dig in there at the end advocating for his community. It's some-

thing we all do here and, I would argue, fairly successfully. That's how we get back.

Ms Churley: Rowing in Toronto.

Mr Bisson: My good friend Marilyn Churley thinks it should be in Toronto, but of course she's advocating for her parish.

This is one of the opportunities that we have in the House, when we have a bill come in that deals with finance, to deal with the broader issues of where we find ourselves when it comes to the financial situation in Ontario. I want to talk about this balanced budget legislation, but I want to take it first of all from a little bit of a historical perspective.

Let me start off by first of all saying this: What the Tories are doing by way of the balanced budget legislation is desperately trying to find a way to enshrine their policies of the last five or six years. They desperately want to be in a position, should the economy go to heck in a handbasket—because we all know the economy is cyclical, and at one point, if not next year, in two years or five years, the economy will go, by way of natural cycles, into another recession. The danger this government has is that once that recession does happen, this government is going to look awfully bad because of what they've done over the last five years.

When you look at the cuts of important programs that are out there to help and sustain people and economies, when you take a look at what they've done by way of the tax cut, the government is not going to have a capacity to respond when the next recession happens as they have had over the past 50 and 100 years in the province of Ontario. This government understands well, because they are a very political government, that they need to find a way to enshrine their legislation, enshrine their way of doing things so that when they are kicked out of government it's difficult for a government coming behind them to repair the damage they've done. One of the ways—I wouldn't argue the only one—that the government can do that is by way of balanced budget legislation.

I would argue this way: If you pass balanced budget legislation, I think it would be fairly difficult for any government to stand up and try to counter that after another election. I don't think the Liberals would try to reverse balanced budget legislation, for political reasons, and I don't quite know what our party would do either if we ended up in that situation, because on the one hand, this whole balanced budget legislation, as far as the politics of the issue, is quite appealing to many voters across party lines. What I would argue is that the government is trying to enshrine their legislation.

Let me take this from a little bit of a historical perspective. I'm going to make a statement and people are going to wonder what this has to do with balanced budget legislation. But if you give me about five minutes, you'll see where I'm going.

The middle class is something that just didn't happen. The middle class is something that was created by way of government policies and laws. Most of us are too young,

certainly I am, but there are some members in this House who may remember some of this from their younger days or may have heard it by way of their parents the way I did, that prior to 1945, the ending of the Second World War, there was in this country, as there was in most modern economies, a very large gap between those who were poor and those who were rich. Back in the early 1900s all the way up until the 1930s and early 1940s, if you had money in North America, specifically here in Ontario, you did really well. You were able to basically do what you wanted. You were able to have the ear of politicians, the ear of judges. You were able to almost control community councils because by and large you controlled those. You were able to get labour for cheap. You were able to do what you wanted and you lived a very good lifestyle. The laws prior to 1945 very much favoured those people with money. On the other hand, if you tended to be working class—there was a very small middle class. Most of them were either working poor or you were rich. There was a very small middle class.

What happened after the war is that many of the men when they came back from overseas and many of the women who came back from industry said, "Hang on, there's something wrong in a democratic society when we have laws that do not reflect the needs of the many but quite frankly are favouring the few." So what we had after the Second World War is that many of the veterans who came back and the women who worked in industry started to demand political action on behalf of governments, both provincial and federal. From 1945 on, governments, both at the federal and provincial levels, started reacting to what the citizenry wanted, which were laws that gave the working people of this country an opportunity to get a bit of a leg up. Governments had to react to many of the struggles that were going on through the 1940s and 1950s.

I would give you a couple of examples. After the Second World War, many of the programs we take for granted today in social services and health care were born. Why? Because people back then said: "Listen, if I'm sick, it's not right that how I get treated is based on how much money I have in my pocket or in my bank account. How I'm treated should be dealt with by way of a state-run program of some form." Along came OHIP. Tommy Douglas and others in Saskatchewan and the premier before him, another CCF premier—his name escapes me now but it will come back to me—basically created health care as we know it today. Why? Because they recognized that what you need is a system of insured health care so that if you got sick you would not go bankrupt, and you'd have the ability to be treated and not have to worry about pulling money out of your pocket in order to get better treatment. That allowed working people to use their capital to build a house or to do whatever, rather than paying for health care. It was a kind of tax break. Rather than giving people a tax break you took away from them a burden they would otherwise have to pay.

1950

Government came in and did programs, as we know, in post-secondary education and also at the primary and secondary levels, where we made education free for individuals. We said, "If you are a child living in Ontario, you don't have to pay to go to school up to grade 12 or grade 13." It gave every child in Ontario—it didn't matter if you were a working-class kid or the kid of some lawyer or doctor or some rich industrialist—everybody an equal crack at getting half-decent education so that when they came out of high school they were at least able to compete on a level playing field.

Eventually, governments responded to the people again by putting in place an affordable community college system and an affordable university system that said again, "Getting into university shouldn't have to be as it was, prior to the war, on the basis of how much money daddy and mommy have, but of my having the ability to learn and move forward in a system of education and not have to worry about how much money my parents have."

So we put in place a good system of public education at both the primary level and the post-secondary level. Governments also, because of pressure on the part of the working class, the people out there working for a living, said after the war, "We need to put in place good labour laws and good health and safety legislation to make sure that men and women who work in Ontario"—and I would argue across Canada—"get some sort of fair treatment," so that the laws were not just skewed for the employer, so that the workers were able to go out and freely negotiate good collective agreements so they were able to get higher disposable incomes and had money to do the things they wanted to do with their families.

My argument is that since 1945, grosso modo, governments at the provincial and federal levels moved by way of putting legislation in place that basically created the middle class. This brings me back to my first point, that the middle class is not something that happened on its own; it happened by government policy. From 1945, governments at the provincial and federal levels created policies and enacted laws that strengthened the middle class and gave it not only some political clout but, quite frankly, the economic clout it needed to prosper. And all of us within this Legislature, I would argue—almost all of us; a few people here were wealthy before they came to the Legislature. But most of us in this Legislature—90%, I would argue—are children of the middle class, where the children were born and grew up within a system where our parents didn't have to mortgage their futures to send us off to university or college to get a good education, our parents did not have to mortgage their futures and our futures to give us affordable health care when they or their kids were ill, and didn't have to mortgage their futures and our futures to deal with what was going on in their very lives when it came to good infrastructure, good programs within communities that built healthy and strong communities.

I would argue that those were the progressive days of Canada and those were the progressive days of Ontario. Those were the times when we as Canadians stood up and said: "I'm proud to be Canadian, because Canada is a country that understands you cannot make laws just for the rich. You have to have laws that balance the need to make money for the rich but not at the expense of the poor and of the working class." Consequently, by way of those laws, we created what we call the middle class.

Along comes the Conservative government in 1995. This government, law after law, policy after policy, has been attacking the middle class of this province. We see that in a number of ways. I talked earlier about education. I said that back when we created our system of public education up to the grade 12 and 13 levels, we made it so that children didn't have to buy their textbooks and to pay to get an education. Every child, no matter what class they came from, was able to benefit from a good system of education up to grade 13.

This government has worn as a badge of honour the attack it has made on our system of public education. I predict that if these guys get the opportunity, within the next five or 10 years we will move to a system of education that says: "Public education fulfills some basic needs, but if you want a better education you can pay for it. We will create a private system of education that gives opportunities to those who want to pay to get a little bit of extra care." Who would benefit from that? It wouldn't be you, Mr Speaker, the member for Perth; it wouldn't be me, the member for Timmins-James Bay; it wouldn't be our children or our grandchildren. It would be the children of those parents who have a lot of money. What this government is doing by its educational policies is creating, over the longer term, a system of education that says, "If you are like the rest of us"—that is, if you don't have a lot of money—"you will get a mediocre system of education," because they've been attacking it by way of policy and by way of funding.

Eventually, when they do allow private, charter schools, which we know this government is going to do, we'll end up with a system that says: "Don't worry, little Johnny or little Susan, mommy and daddy have lots of money. You can go off to a good system of private education where you can get some advantages because of the wealth and power of your parents." How the clock is turning, how we are going back in time, how we are attacking the middle class and how we are increasing the gap between the rich and the poor by way of this government's policy.

I would argue that it's the same in health care. We went from a system of pure private health care prior to the Second World War to a system of almost pure public health care, the most efficient health care system in the world. Cost-wise, compared to anybody, including the USA, our system of health care is cheaper per dollar for equal treatment than anywhere in the world. It's a system that said if you have a heart attack, if you suffer from some disease, if you're involved in a tragic accident, they don't stop you on the way to the emergency ward and

say: "Do you have Chargex? Do you have money in your bank account?" They say: "Come in. We will treat you." They gave you good treatment to deal with what was affecting you.

We are now moving to a system where the government, by way of policies and laws, is attacking the universality of our system of health care, to where we are now seeing that the government will allow private health care to coexist with public health care. Who will benefit from that system? Will it be us, the middle class? Will it be the working poor? No, it won't. It will be the people who have money and wealth who will do better no matter what the system is, because they will have the dollars to pay. Yet again we will find ourselves in a position with the growing gap where the rich get a good system of health care and good treatment, and those who don't have the money and the means to afford it will make do with a mediocre system of public health care. We see it happening. This government, by way of policy, is attacking the middle class and is increasing the gap between the rich and the poor in this province to an extent we've never seen before.

The biggest joke is what this government does by way of economic development policy. It's not even a joke. Quite frankly, it's sad. This government, by way of its policy, will not put in place any kind of economic development program that competes with something in the private sector. Let me explain what that means. In the past, under Tory governments, under Liberal governments and certainly under New Democratic governments, government was involved in the business of local economic development. For communities like Perth, Timmins, Sault Ste Marie, North Bay, Ottawa and Cornwall, governments had programs that said, "We need to find ways to increase the activity of local economic development so that as many as possible of the dollars being invested in our communities stay within our communities." This government got rid of all those programs. All the programs that were in place to help stimulate local economic development have been cancelled by this government since 1995, and we don't see anything coming back to replace them.

The biggest joke we have here is a Minister of Economic Development and Trade who doesn't have any programs but gets to travel all over the world. I saw him come back to the House this week all tanned. Where did he go this time? Aruba? You have to wonder what this government's economic development policy is when all it does is send the Minister of Economic Development and Trade travelling about—which I imagine has some benefit—but doesn't have any programs for our people here in Canada.

2000

Let me give you a good example. I want to tell you what's happening in my community. Royal Oak Mines, a mine that has been in existence in our community for almost 70 years, went bankrupt last June. Why? Because somebody by the name of Peggy Witte, one of these big, rich industrialists who had all the answers and told

government how to run its affairs, ran up a deficit of over \$700 million on that company and consequently threw it into receivership along with a number of other companies she controlled.

We ended up in a situation last June, when it went bankrupt, that a receiver was appointed who went out to try to find a buyer. At the end of the process in August, when they didn't find a buyer, on a Friday afternoon the receiver called the workers in to a meeting by way of the union and said: "By Monday, the mine is closed. Everybody pick up your tools, empty your hook and get the heck out of here because we're closing the mine after some 70 years of production." Might be 60.

What say did anybody in our community have in any of this? This decision was made by way of bad policies on the part of the former owner. But on the part of the system we find ourselves in today, there was not a response on the part of the provincial government. I was surprised that the Conservative government, which supposedly is a government of business, didn't find a way to respond. It was left to the workers, through the United Steelworkers of America, Local 440, people like Rick Chopp, Madd Dawg, Jimmy Kmit, Harry Hynd, the director of the District Steelworkers, Rob Healey and a whole bunch of other people I dealt with to try to find a way to get this mine up and running again. We've been working at it for the better part of two months, and we found somebody who is prepared to buy the mine.

But here's the problem. The federal and provincial government policies we have, when it comes to how we deal with bankruptcies, don't favour workers in communities coming forward with local solutions to get their plants up and running again. The bankruptcy court has said to the receiver, "We want you to go out and conclude a deal that you started negotiating with another company," even though there's an offer on the table that is equal to that of the first buyer. You say, "What's the point?" The point is that the people who want to buy the mine, who are dealing with the receiver, want to keep the mine closed and are going to your government for environmental concessions.

On the other hand you have workers who have come together by way of another company to put together an offer that says, "We're going to reopen the mine, we're going to deal with the environmental issues and we're going to put ourselves in a situation that is best for the community." But the policies of both federal and provincial governments—and, I would argue, especially provincial in this case—put us in a situation that favours the large multinationals. I make the point: Those policies are increasing the gap between the rich and the poor.

I want to pick up on a point that my good friend the member for Broadview-Greenwood made, in the minute and 45 seconds I have left. If we find ourselves in a position during this term where we go into a recession, this government and this province are going to be in a lot of trouble, because the government has taken away their ability to respond by attacking the programs that have been built up over the past 50 to 60 years that deal with

trying to cushion a local economy and trying to cushion the effects on local economies and individuals when you have large recessions.

Second, those attacks are directly on the middle class. We now find ourselves in a position where we're sort of going back, where there's an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, because of the policies of this government.

In the 20 minutes that I had, I've got 54 seconds left. I wish I had longer, because I'd like to take the next 20 minutes to deal with some of the policies we want to put forward that deal with how you diminish that growing gap and give the middle class some actual power to do something. But that will be another debate.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Give me another 20 minutes and I'll lay it out for you.

This government, by way of balanced budget legislation, is moving to enshrine changes in government. They're trying to handcuff future governments in dealing with the policies they have created that in the end are adding to the growing gap between the rich and the poor in this province.

With that, Mr Speaker, I thank you for this time in the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions and comments?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Timmins-James Bay. If perhaps he's reading the recent press, I think the article on Sunday, November 14, in the Sun by Linda Leatherdale is important, a very good caption of the current state of taxation in Ontario.

The article is entitled, "What Harris Cuts, Ottawa Hikes." It really goes on in some detail. With the permission of members, I'll read it into the record.

"Only last spring, when Ontario NDP leader Howard Hampton was bellyaching that only the top 6% of Ontario earners got a tax break from Premier Harris, Stevenson began to crunch the numbers.

"Socialist Hampton was wrong, wrong, wrong. Stevenson, a mailroom clerk, earns just under \$30,000 and found that when Harris cut Ontario's income tax rate to 40.5%, his provincial income taxes fell by \$800 a year."

This is 30%. In fact, all taxpayers in Ontario experienced a relief in the burden of debt.

Linda Leatherdale goes on to say, "Both David Peterson's Liberals and Bob Rae's NDP hiked income taxes 11 times."

This article is worth reading, and I refer to it again—it's in the weekend edition—"pushing our combined top income rate to 53.19%—the highest in the country." Clearly, our Premier's against tax increases.

But the real culprit here is that this month Paul Martin announced EI premiums would fall to 2.5% for every \$100 in earnings. In fact, at the same time they hiked the CPP burden on the taxpayer starting January 2000.

A typical earner here, who's quoted in this article, is overtaxed—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr Bradley: I enjoyed the remarks of the member for Timmins-James Bay because I think he put in context what this debate is all about, what this bill is all about. It's a symbolic bill. There are a lot of loopholes in it that we see.

A concern would be if it were to apply, for instance, to a local level of government. Then the local level of government would have to assume certain financial responsibilities or penalties. That would be a matter of concern because then we have the provincial government simply downloading on those local entities.

I know the member didn't have enough time to talk about gambling and how the gambling revenues apparently are not affected by this particular bill. I can remember when they were known as—because they didn't have special titles—Mike Harris and Ernie Eaves and they were members to the Conservative caucus. They said they didn't want to get their hands on any of this gambling money because it was always filthy money that they didn't want to touch.

Under the Conservative government we've had huge expansions of gambling opportunities in this province. I know the family values group within the caucus, which is a fair group within the caucus, has probably expressed its view that this gambling is detrimental to the social fabric of this province.

Of course, what they wanted initially were the video lottery terminals, the electronic slot machines, the crack cocaine of gambling, in every bar and every restaurant of every village, town and city in the province. That's what they really wanted. We in the Opposition stopped them from that.

Then they had the Mike Harris gambling halls. There were to be 44 of them all around the province, seven days a week, 24 hours a day—the Mike Harris gambling halls. So this government has an addiction to gambling revenues.

Ms Churley: I'm not going to talk about gambling at the moment. I want to congratulate the member for Timmins-James Bay for his speech. He gave a very interesting historical perspective on where the middle class originated and what's happening now. Of course, it's not just the NDP saying this, but it's well documented in all kinds of journals and publications that whatever the causes—and I'm not going to stand here and say it's all the fault of the Tory government and government right now. I am, I suppose, large enough to admit that there is a whole bunch of reasons why that is happening. Because of the global economy there have been a lot of changes.

2010

The reality is, as we should acknowledge on all sides of the House, that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening in a frightening and alarming way, and in fact the middle class is disappearing. That is essentially

what the member for Timmins-James Bay was pointing out here tonight. It is incumbent upon all of us as legislators, no matter which party, to start addressing that issue and stop pretending that it isn't a problem and turn our heads away from it and merrily go on our way cutting taxes and talking about balanced budgets.

The other thing that the member was talking about, and we have raised it and will continue to raise it, is the underinvestment in strategic investments in education, our public health system, the protection of the environment, the needs of disabled people. That kind of underinvestment has been going on for some time and it's starting to show. So it is important that the government listen to the reality of what their tax cuts mean to our society in Ontario.

Mr Hastings: It's good to hear the more balanced views, I must concede to the member for Broadview-Greenwood. She's very good at bringing out the concern for the destruction or the decline of the middle class. Also, the member for Timmins-James Bay brought that out as well. Unfortunately, I think they somehow confuse root cause and reason for the decline of the middle class. All you have to do is look at the unusually high tax rates in this country, even in this province before we came to power. It has nothing to do with the partisan stuff, it simply has to do with the reality.

I'm interested in some comments made in one of our national papers recently regarding Saskatchewan, which has always been the leader for the NDP across Canada. A businessman from Saskatoon was pointing out recently that in the province of Saskatchewan, unfortunately: "We have more University of Saskatchewan graduates working in Calgary than in Saskatchewan. That's what happens when you have stupid policies." What he was referring to is the high cost of maintaining crown corporations like Saskatchewan Power, Saskatchewan Energy, potash and so on. You end up, when you contrast the two western provinces, that Saskatchewan dependants pay \$5,938 whereas in Alberta they only pay \$4,188.90. That's a significant difference. Wouldn't you think common sense would show where people are going to go? To that lower tax jurisdiction, because they have greater opportunities there than in high-priced Saskatchewan. That's where the middle class is declining, unfortunately.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Bisson: I'm not going to comment too much on the last point—I think it's a bit of a broken record—but I want to come back to the original point I was making, that all of us in this Legislature have to start taking seriously what's happening to the middle class across this province. We find—it doesn't matter where it is, in what part of the province—that the middle class is more and more starting to feel under attack when it comes to their economic situation. They see themselves, by way of user fees when it comes to education, when it comes to health care or whatever it might be, having to put more and more out of their pockets because of the government

trying to deal with how to pay for their silly tax cut that they put in place.

I just want to come back to the point that I made before, which is that what we see now in this province, in comparison to most other provinces, is a larger gap between the rich and the poor. If you've got money in Ontario you do quite well. If you happen to be not doing so well as far as your economic situation, you don't do as well as you would in other provinces across the country. I would say to the government, it's not all of your doing but I think a lot of your policies have a lot to do with it.

Yes, as the member for Broadview-Greenwood said, it is partly because of what's happening with large multinationals having policies that are squeezing the middle class—I would argue also some of the policies that we see in the United States of America—but your policies are certainly contributing, I believe, to an extension of the gap between the rich and the poor.

I would say to this government—I'm just going to make the point that was made a little while ago—it's going to happen. The economy runs in a cycle. We will end up going into a recession once again. It's unfortunate; that's the way the economy goes.

What you people have done by way of your fiscal policies in this province and the laws that you've put in place is not going to bode well for the working people of this province, and especially the middle class, come the next recession.

Mr Galt: I certainly appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 7, the taxpayers' protection legislation. Certainly this is one that I've been looking forward to for the last four to five years, because really what we're talking about here is whose money. We talk about "the taxpayers' money"—we use that rather loosely around here at Queen's Park—and we talk about "the public funds." But these monies don't belong to the politicians at Queen's Park or municipally or federally, for that matter. I personally think the term "public funds" is very misleading when in fact it is the taxpayers' money. Certainly it is the taxpayers' money until it gets into the hands of bureaucrats and politicians.

If taxpayers had their way, I know that it wouldn't be spent the way it has been in the past. Certainly they wouldn't be spending it on a whole lot of interest on debt, close to \$10 billion that we're now up to. It's time we started to remember that this money is literally being taken away from them, like it's at gunpoint. Just try not paying your taxes if you don't believe that's the way it's being taken away.

I know it's a huge step for the opposition to recognize this, that it's the taxpayers' money. They seem to think that it's their God-given right, that it's their money and that they should have the right to say how it's spent, when in fact it should be the public that have the right to say how it's spent and indeed how much is raised.

It's very timely to be bringing in this legislation, especially as we approach having the budget balanced, and there's been some criticism here this evening about a deficit rolling along. But we've created 610,000 net new

jobs since we were elected in June 1995. Yes, we could have balanced the budget much faster, but not with the criticism and suggestions from the official opposition, the Liberals, on how we should be spending, spending, spending. I think it's very timely now, as we approach this balanced budget legislation, as we've reduced the provincial income taxes by some 30%, and we're going to continue to reduce the provincial income tax by another 20%. We're in the process of reducing the corporate taxation by a total of 50%. We've eliminated the employer health tax for those employers with a payroll under \$400,000, and we've also managed to get the rates of the WCB—now the WSIB—down, all of which are stimulating jobs.

We now have one of the lowest income tax rates—it is the lowest income tax rate in Canada—and it's certainly time to protect the taxpayers as we move into the future from any unwanted tax increases.

What this government has really been doing is stopping a vicious tax spiral that's been going on—from 1985 through to 1995, some 65 tax increases. I'll highlight a few of them just to show you how destructive these taxes have been.

Back in 1985, as soon as the Liberals came into government, they upped the provincial income tax to 50% of the basic federal rate. That wasn't quite enough. They had to go on and put a surtax of 3% on all the Ontario tax over \$5,000.

Then along in 1988 in their budget, they added a cent to the litre of gasoline. Then that wasn't quite enough. They added another cent to the retail sales tax here in the province of Ontario, taking it up to 8%. But Peterson then realized it was wrong and when he was campaigning in 1990 tried to take that 1% off—he announced it down in Brockville—but, lo and behold, it was a little too late.

In 1989 they kept right on going. They added two cents per litre on to gasoline and they upped the provincial income tax rate to 53% of the basic federal rate. That was the time they also brought in the employer health tax on all Ontario employers, just such a job-killing tax, and drove jobs out of this province.

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They also brought in a tire tax that a lot of people thought was an environmental tax; it was just another tax grab. Then, of course, in 1989 they brought in the commercial concentration levy, another job-killing tax.

As we moved to the next government in 1991, they really jumped on to the gasoline. They thought this was a great place to add on a tax, 3.4 cents per litre on gasoline and on diesel fuel. They also thought the surtax was just a great place to go, so they upped it to 14% on all tax over \$10,000 here in Ontario.

In 1992 they upped the provincial income tax to 54.5% of the basic rate and jumped the surtax to 20% but dropped it down to anything over \$8,000 of tax provincially.

In 1993 the provincial income tax went up to 58% of the basic federal tax, at least that's where it stopped and held until we came into government. At that time they

upped the surtax to 25% on anything over \$8,000, and in 1994 they upped the surtax to 30%.

The Liberals and the NDP raise taxes just as surely as winter follows autumn, and it took the Harris government to do something to reverse this whole vicious cycle that we were going through on taxes spiralling upwards. We look to the federal government and we hear so much talk about cutting taxes, but it seems to be about all we're getting is lip service. It's rather ironic that the first tax cuts that we brought in were totally eaten up by tax increases by the federal government. I found it rather appalling that the Liberals across the House would demand, "Where were those tax cuts?"—they weren't seeing it—when in fact it was their federal cousins that were gobbling up that tax cut that we had made. All they had to do was ask their federal cousins, and they would have found out where that money was going.

It's great that the Harris government has come in and cut taxes, because at the time that we did, we had the highest tax burden in this country. That certainly isn't something to be very proud of, but I'm sure that the previous two parties when in government certainly thought it was great.

You'd almost think, from the opposition and their suggestions and the way they talk in here about spending, that people want to have high taxes, that taxes for some reason are good for you—maybe like medicine, it's got to be bad to be good for you—but it really doesn't make too much sense.

I want to bring to your attention that during this last election the leader of the official opposition said to Robert Fisher, when he was on Focus Ontario: "If you want tax cuts, don't look at me. I'm not the tax cut guy." Of course, as time went on, he changed his mind, but that's typical of being a Liberal, you're allowed to change your mind—some people call it flip-flopping.

We've heard a lot from the NDP tonight and some of the Liberals about poverty, but I can tell you one of the ways to fight poverty in this country is through tax cuts.

They talk out of one side of their mouth about the plight of the working poor and wanting to help them, but I can assure you this evening there was absolutely no question that high taxes hurt the poor and create large numbers of poor in this province. If you want to turn the tide on poverty, one of the ways to go about it is to cut taxes, reduce the tax on the poor. In Canada, annually, \$6 billion is collected from people who live below the poverty line. That's \$6 billion that's really blood from the proverbial stone.

In 1997 Stats Canada indicated that the low-income cut-off point for singles was \$16,320, and for a family of three it was \$28,119. People under those income lines are really working poor. There are single moms, there are older workers, with little prospect into the future. These are the very people that the Liberals and the NDP keep going on and on about, and you'd almost think they were genuinely concerned with their comments. You would think that they would truly want to give a tax break to these people and you'd truly think that they would want

to get permission from them before they would raise taxes.

I don't think there's any question that Ontario has been leading in tax cuts across this nation.

If you look at where different governments start their taxation and you look to the federal Liberals, they start taxing at an income of \$6,500. Go to the US; their taxing starts at \$9,500. Go to some of the other industrialized countries; they don't start an income tax until you get to \$15,000 per year. They recognize that those at the low-end income scale are the people who can least afford to pay the taxes. By recognizing them, the end result is that you're not taxing the poor, and that's the way it should be—but not with the federal Liberals here in Canada.

You can certainly thank the federal Liberals for being tax-happy, the ones who are creating all the taxes to create the harm on the poor, and also the tax-happy provincial governments that we've had in the past. The result has been that Revenue Canada has gotten richer and our poor have been getting poorer and poorer.

From 1995 to 1999, with the changes in the provincial income taxes, we have eliminated income tax from some 600,000 of the working poor. I would suggest that's what the federal government should be doing as well, and that indeed would help the working poor in this province. I can tell you that that's what a compassionate government is all about. It's not the hand-wringing that we see on the other side of the House or all these displays and song and dance that they go through, but this is real, concrete, decisive action to help the poor in this province. It's really called putting your money where your mouth is.

I want to make reference to 10 reasons for cutting taxes. It was written by Walter Robinson, and I'd just like to highlight some of these reasons that this individual uses. The number 1 that he has, "We've had heavy tax increases." There's no question. If you look from a Canadian basis, from 1965 to 1995 revenues went up some 1,569%. Direct taxes on persons went up 2,501%. That's here in Canada over a 30-year period.

The second reason that we should be cutting taxes: "High taxes foster an underground economy." I don't think there's any question on that. You can go to the problem we were having a few years ago with the taxes on cigarettes and the smuggling of cigarettes into this country, taking chances on being shot at coming across the river, coming across the lakes. The taxes were so high that it was worth that kind of risk. It's estimated that in Canada 15% of our economy is underground.

I think it's interesting to point out that Puerto Rico cut their taxes at the high-end marginal tax rate from 67.6% to 41%. The end result: Total tax revenue increased by 28%. A lot of the people who hadn't been paying tax came out of the woodwork and started paying tax and contributing to society, but with very, very high taxes it just drove them underground and it just wasn't working.

Another reason to cut taxes: "Canadians are indeed fed up with the taxes in this country." That came from an Angus Reid poll in December 1988; 82% of Canadians believe that taxes are too high, and that really shouldn't

be a big surprise to any of us. Most Canadians think government believes that someone who is rich is anyone who happens to have a job.

Item 4: "Politicians promised a tax cut." In 1993, the Prime Minister of this country stated: "Canadians have reached the saturation level with respect to taxation. No government really can expect to generate new revenues through new taxes." That was our Prime Minister in 1993, and we all know how many taxes they've increased since 1993 till now.

Also a reason for cutting is high taxes discourage productivity. In Saskatchewan there's just an excellent example of that with the potash mine, and that was mentioned earlier this evening. Once they got to the point where a dollar investment meant that 86% of the profit was going in taxes, they essentially shut down the mine. Once those taxes were reduced to 35% of profit, they invested a half billion dollars into that mine.

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The sixth point that Walter Robinson made was, "Lower taxes equal higher revenues. As has already been pointed out here this evening, the revenues went up significantly here in the province with a cut in taxes. Dr Gerald Scully of the University of Texas suggests that the maximum rate of all the taxes put together should never go above 21% to 23% of the gross domestic product of the country. In Canada our total taxes right now work out to 37.2%. That's almost double what's recommended by Dr Scully.

Also, the seventh point he makes is that, "people flee high-tax jurisdictions." Dr Richard Vedder of Ohio University pointed out that in the US 1,000 people per day from 1980 to 1988 moved from the high-tax jurisdictions to the low-tax jurisdictions. Certainly that's been happening here in Canada as people have moved from BC to Alberta because of the horrendous tax load that was being levied in BC.

Walter Robinson also points out that, "it's time for payback to taxpayers." Over the past five years the federal government cut spending by only \$13 billion but their tax revenues have gone up \$39 billion. They have balanced the budget on the backs of taxpayers. They haven't stimulated the economy. It's been the province of Ontario that has stimulated the economy.

Item 9 is: "Prioritize spending." There's no question there's adequate money coming in. The problem isn't revenue, the problem has been spending; and that's been true both provincially and federally.

His last point relates to tax cuts creating jobs. Since 1995, as has been mentioned here earlier, we've created 610,000 net new jobs; 43,600 created last month. How many were created from 1990 to 1995? Minus 20,000 jobs. Very shameful. It was pointed out back in 1995 by the Bank of Canada that the taxes that had increased over the four years prior to 1995 cost the economy of this country 130,000 net jobs.

If the previous government in 1990-95 had just left taxes alone, just let them sit still, 130,000 jobs would have been created. But they kept increasing taxes, and as

they increased taxes they lost revenue. I believe it worked out to about \$4 billion a year that they lost in revenue as they kept increasing their taxes.

There is no question that we should remember where the money comes from. I started out my presentation this evening talking about it's being the taxpayers' money. I think too often politicians think it's their money and they have the right to be spending it however they think it should be spent. We have to be more accountable and that's what this bill is really all about, accountability to the taxpayers. If we're not accountable to them, then who else should we be accountable to? Yes, it is the taxpayers' money, and this legislation is going to remind us and remind future governments of whose money it is. It is not their money, it is in fact the taxpayers' money.

Collecting taxes should be similar to almost any other transaction that goes on in our economy. If it's justified and good services are provided, then most people are reasonably comfortable about paying those taxes. But if there's no consumer choice and it's just, "We know what's best for you," as we've heard from the other side of the House, then taking those taxes is much like expropriation.

This taxpayer protection legislation reminds us just how drastic a measure is necessary to get it across to the opposition. As we look into the future, we're going to be scrutinizing these expenditures much more closely. It should be about looking after the public good, not just what politicians necessarily think is right, although if we look at it and expenditures require increased taxes, then the public will be consulted. I think that that's only fair. Again, it's the taxpayers' money and it's a very compelling reason to go out and consult with them through a referendum.

This is certainly the case, and when they give up that money maybe, once they have gone through a referendum, they can agree it's the money formerly known as the taxpayers' money. Then there will certainly be just cause, if they vote in favour, that that money can be taken and spent as it would be put on that legislation. For this reason I am very supportive of this legislation and enthusiastically look forward to seeing it being passed.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I can't speak for everyone on this side of the House, but I can tell you that I certainly appreciate the tax cuts and am using them. I don't know if we're typical or not. We have five children at home and we have another child at Queen's University. I am using my tax savings to pay the tuition at Queen's, which has doubled over the last five years. I'm using it to pay for the tuition at Loyalist College, which has gone up 10% every year. I'm using it to put \$2 tags on garbage bags, which I didn't have to four years ago, and then they're only getting picked up every second week. I'm using it for when the kids want to go swimming, to pay increased entrance fees into the provincial parks. I'm using it to go and pick up the children after school because the school board no longer

has the funding for the late bus, for all of us who live in rural communities.

At that stage I've run out of my tax savings, but I'm still buying school supplies that used to be provided for the children. I'm paying money to drive on 407, which was a concept that was alien to us a few years ago. We paid money to the province to build highways and then we drove on them when we paid. I'm using money for that. I'm using money to help a 92-year-old friend pay for drugs that used to be covered under the drug plan. I don't know what I'd have done without those savings, because my user fees have gone up more than I would have been able to handle.

This government I believe has led in tax transfers over the last four years. I am acutely conscious that if a budget can't be balanced, one easy mechanism is to transfer more responsibilities to schools, hospitals and municipalities and let them be burdened with the cost. I think we're deceiving the public when we purport to them that this is in fact going to guarantee a balanced budget. What it guarantees is only that they're still ripe for most costs somewhere else in the system.

Ms Churley: I appreciated the comments from the member for Northumberland, although he didn't say anything new. I've heard this speech before, and once again I was somewhat offended by his assertion that those of us in the opposition—I believe he used words like “bellyache” or “grandstand” or whatever it was—don't have real concern about the poor in our communities who are suffering as a result of this government's policies and cuts. I find that offensive. I don't know if he sees any of those people in his constituency, on his streets, but I certainly do, day out, day in, in my riding. I would appreciate if the member perhaps might want to withdraw those remarks.

I would say to him that as they point fingers and blame other, past governments for what they see as the sins of today, remind him that the last year a Tory government balanced a budget was in 1969-70. The last year that the Tories were in power, the deficit was over \$3 billion; I believe that was in 1985.

It's up to people to decide, and so far they've decided to stick with the Tories. So far I guess they agree with you overall, the majority, that it's OK to borrow billions of dollars to give a tax cut that mainly benefits the rich.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): What did you do?

Ms Churley: Yes, our government borrowed money and yes, our government raised taxes. We all know that. Whether it was misguided or not, we were in a bad recession that was obviously not caused by the NDP—what a ridiculous assertion—and tried to keep people afloat during the worst recession since the 1930s. That has to be acknowledged. You're borrowing money to give a tax cut to the rich.

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The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Members would know that interjections are always out of order, but

they're particularly out of order when you're not in your seat.

Mr Newman: It's my pleasure to comment on the speech from my colleague from Northumberland. I think he presented an excellent speech here tonight where he talked about the various tax cuts this government has brought forward since 1995. As you know, our government has brought forward 99 different tax cuts in our province. What we've seen in our province are 615,000 new net jobs created in our province, as the member for Northumberland mentioned, since the throne speech of 1995. These jobs are not only happening in ridings represented by members of this side of the House but in ridings represented by members opposite. They're seeing that there are more jobs in their communities today as well.

If we look back under the previous Liberal and NDP governments, we actually saw 65 tax hikes. How many new jobs were created between 1990 and 1995 under the NDP? We lost over 10,000 jobs in our province. Ontario saw a net loss of 10,000 jobs.

Just this past month, in October 1999, we saw 43,600 new net jobs created in our province. I think the member from Northumberland was very correct to point that out. When he was mentioning all the various tax hikes brought about by the previous governments—65 by the Liberals and NDP from 1985 to 1995—it made me think about previous budgets. If you think back, we saw during previous budgets—the night before the budget came out—long lineups at the gas pumps, long lineups at the LCBO stores, long lineups at the Brewers Retail outlets and long lineups in convenience stores where people were buying cigarettes. Why was that? People knew, they were confident, that the governments of that day were going to hike taxes and they were right. Governments went on to hike taxes 65 times.

They have the confidence in our government; there are no lineups the night before the budget.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): The government likes to take us back in history. I'm not going to take you back to 1987 or 1990. I'll take you back to 1995.

During the 1995 campaign, Mr Harris staged a media event promising taxpayer protection legislation and balanced budget legislation that was promoted by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. As a matter of fact, Mike Harris signed a pledge during a news conference on May 30, 1995, that “(1) would make an increase of existing tax rates subject to approval by the voters of Ontario in a binding referendum”—he didn't keep that promise; “(2) require the elimination of Ontario's operating and capital deficits within at least five years, along with interim deficit targets for each of those years”—he didn't keep that promise; “(3) contain a pay-for-performance ministerial salary penalty for the Premier and cabinet ministers if the interim deficit targets were not met.” He didn't keep that promise either. Why should we believe him now?

Now let's go to the province of Ontario annual report of the Ministry of Finance 1998-99—the Ontario debt as

a percentage of gross domestic product—and you're bragging about how you've helped the economy and how you're going to balance the budget and reduce the debt.

In 1994-95, when you took office, the Ontario debt as a percentage of GDP was 28.8%. Guess what is was in 1995-96? It went up to 31.1%. Then it went to 30.2%. Now it has dropped, although it's going to remain the same at 29.7%.

If you're going to brag about some things, you should also brag about those figures.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member from Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I'm pleased to respond and particularly appreciative of the comments made by the member from Scarborough Southwest: brilliant observations on his part of my presentation. The other three didn't do quite as well.

I think it's kind of interesting. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings was talking about his young people going to university and college. But from the time they were in government until now we've gone from someplace around the 22% of our young people going to university or college and it's now at 34%. Something must be right about what's happening out there, a great place to invest in their future. I think he could explain about the cutting off of the late buses, having been the chair of the board, probably because they're spending too much money on administration and not enough on students.

It's interesting, the member from Broadview-Greenwood talking about poverty. In Canada, according to the UN, we now have it at 6% and we have the second-lowest poverty rate in the world. I think that's something to be proud of in one way, but 6% is still 6% too much. Until we get rid of that 6%, this government will not be satisfied.

The member from Essex started off with a great talk about debt compared to GDP and then he talked himself right out of it. He started out at 28.8%, it went up, and now it's coming back down; it's back down to 29.7%. The mess this government took over in 1995 was like trying to turn around the Queen Elizabeth in the Toronto Harbour. It was difficult, it took time and it certainly wasn't easy. But obviously, from the figures he had, going from 31.5% down to 29.7%, this government has it going in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Mr Speaker, I will be sharing my time this evening with the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

First of all, I think it's important for me to state, as a Liberal representative in the House, that the idea of protecting taxpayers is certainly not foreign; it was part of the Liberal Party platform. It has certainly been part of the Liberal Party experience when the Liberal Party was the government in Ontario. It's part of the Liberal experience at the federal level in Canada.

The member from Etobicoke North made a statement earlier this evening that taxpayers are tired of footing the bill. Unfortunately, he didn't complete the thought with the very accurate phrase that the taxpayers are tired of footing the bill and they are still footing the bill.

"Taxpayer protection act" is really a misnomer, and I believe that taxpayers are as vulnerable now and perhaps even more vulnerable than they were in 1995, when this government first came to power.

I tried to imagine an analogy for the taxpayers of Ontario that accurately describes the business setting or situation in which we find ourselves as a province. I find it hard to understand how the government could present itself as an efficient money manager with this scenario, and I believe it is an accurate analogy. I present this example: In 1995, a homeowner buys a home for \$100,000 and agrees to pay a certain amount in payment. Four years later, after making all of those payments, the homeowner now owes \$125,000 instead of \$100,000.

It could be argued, "but the payments are lower; that's what the government has done." Yes, indeed, the payments are lower, our commitment in tax is lower, but the debt is higher. We have mortgaged the future of our children to provide tax cuts. The government would offer to us that this has stimulated the economy without any recognition of the other economic realities of the day, those realities being a booming American market, an attractive Canadian market because of the buying power of the American dollar.

It's unfortunate that the government doesn't recognize and attribute some of the growth, probably reasonably a good deal of the growth, to those factors. But to suggest that economically we in Ontario are in a better financial position today than in 1995, when they took office, in my opinion is misleading and misrepresenting of all the information that taxpayers of Ontario should have. We owe more money today than we did before.

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I would also suggest that the services to the people of Ontario have declined at the same level as the taxes in the province. In my part of rural Ontario, as I campaigned and I came to know the issues of the people in the area—and certainly I think the results in rural Ontario reflect that rural, middle-class Ontarians were forgotten by the last government. Check the election results. Rural, middle-class Ontarians have experienced significant reduction in services. Ministry of the Environment offices and officers have been reduced and have closed; Ministry of Natural Resources offices have closed; Ministry of Agriculture offices have closed. In my riding of 12,000 square kilometres in rural Ontario, there is not one Ministry of Agriculture office open. Ministry of Transportation and licensing offices have closed within the riding and have resulted in waits of eight to 10 months for people to simply get a driver's license. So while you might boast about reducing taxes, let's also tell the people of Ontario the services that you've reduced as well.

What concerns me now are the proposed reductions that will continue.

Interjections.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Lobbing the ball back and forth—"it's their fault, it's their fault"—and not taking any responsibility of their own only reflects the arrogance that this government continues to demonstrate to the people of the province, the insensitivity to the lack of service that the people are experiencing. Certainly that's the case in my riding.

So this evening I stand to support legislation that would protect taxpayers and would ensure that budgets are balanced. Certainly Liberal governments of the past have done it and they didn't need a law to do it. The federal government has done it; they didn't need a law to do it. If that's what it takes for this government to balance a budget, then I'm in favour of doing it because I think it's the reasonable, responsible thing to do. But don't present in this House that tax cuts have been such a benefit to the people, because I can take you to a lot of individuals who would demonstrate to you that tax cuts have not helped them, that tax cuts have only translated into user fees and they are out of pocket more money now than before this government took office.

So while I stand and I support taxpayer protection and the entire philosophy that it represents, if that's what it takes, a law in the province, to ensure that a government acts responsibly, I will support it. It is something the Liberals have done without a law, but if that's what the Conservatives need to balance the budget, then I will support it.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Taxpayer protection and balanced budget: I will say at the outset that it's remarkable how well this government names its bills. I concur with the member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington that it's unfortunate that we have to enact a law, that this is the only way this government is going to balance its budget.

It's a pleasure for me to speak on a concept that I agree with, which is taxpayer protection and a balanced budget. I must say, who would not agree with that statement? I have to also say that there's an interesting aspect to speaking to this bill in that the reality is that Ontario is one of the last Canadian jurisdictions to adopt some form of budget or tax control legislation.

As has been the trend with this government, they like to look back and remind everyone of past records, of what they said and what they did, or divert responsibility to others. I'd like to remind this government of its 1995 campaign commitment, which was to balance the budget in the first mandate. The revolution document did not mention balanced budget legislation or tax referenda. However in 1995, Harris had the media event that supported taxpayer protection legislation and balanced budget legislation and it was promoted by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. He signed a taxpayer protection pledge on May 30, 1995. In that pledge he suggested that the legislation would be introduced in the first session and that the legislation would require balancing the

budget within the first mandate. This was not the case, but better late than never.

The other reality that is fact is that Premier Harris has been Premier of this province for almost five years and has not balanced the budget as yet. The debt of the province of Ontario over his term went up \$21 billion, in his first four years. The debt has increased from \$88 billion to \$109 billion. This year, I understand, the debt is going up another \$4 billion.

I remind this House again that the Harris government loves to lambaste the record of previous governments. Well, we saw and understand what was happening when the credit rating of the province of Ontario went from AAA to AA+ to AA to AA-. This happened during the NDP government, under a horrific economic downturn. We all know that.

Mr Crozier: Where is it today?

Ms Di Cocco: Exactly. Where is it today? We have now been through almost five years of a government that has touted fiscal responsibility, and we have been and are still experiencing strong economic growth. It begs the question: Why is it that after four years, the major credit-rating agencies still give Ontario the same low credit rating of AA-?

As the member for Scarborough-Agincourt has stated in the past, the other interesting measurement of the debt is what is called debt to gross domestic product. This is an objective evaluation which shows that when Premier Harris became Premier, the debt to GDP was 28.8%. According to the government's own figures, the debt to GDP is higher, and it was at 31.9% after four years in government.

I hear over and over about how tax cuts are what has driven the economic boom in this province. I must say that I'm not quite as eloquent as the member for St Paul's but I have to agree with his comment that taking credit for the economic boom by the Tories is like the rooster taking credit for the sunrise. I think that says it all.

What is the government's role? Is it just tax cuts? Is tax cuts the only mantra that we have from this government? That's how it appears to me, anyway. And why do people pay taxes? Taxes are paid for the quality of life in a healthy, well-rounded society.

Let's look objectively at the economic prosperity of this province. The United States economy and our economy are interlinked. Our economy rises and falls in lockstep with the United States. This has been the case in the past, and it is more so as our trade corridors have shifted from east-west to north-south. Our exports to the United States have grown in nine years from 28% to 49%.

I have recognized that there are two parts to this bill: the balanced budget portion and the taxpayer portion. The part that has been a long time in coming and that I am in total agreement with is that the government must balance its books on a four-year cycle. As my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt signalled, his concern is with accounting practices of the government that will come back to haunt us. Both schools and hospitals that

have made needed efficiencies within the system will now carry on a burden of their debt. This debt comes off the provincial books and goes on to the school boards and on to the hospitals.

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I agree with balanced budgets. Again, I don't understand why we needed legislation for this government to set a goal to balance its budget. On the other hand, I still believe that the Harris government has put the cart before the horse by giving tax cuts before they got their fiscal house in order. I believe that government must be held accountable, but in action, not just in rhetoric. It is a fact that government agencies such as the environment, health, education, culture, heritage and so many other sectors have become ineffective because they cannot provide the needed services this province needs.

What good is a tax cut if we lose what I consider sustainable people development? What good is it to hear in the Financial Times that the economy is booming if the disabled or students or patients or our infrastructure do not reap the benefit of this economic boom? The question is, of course, who is the economic boom for? It certainly isn't for the people of the province.

I also do not understand how every sector has to continue to do more with less, but the Premier's office has doubled, cabinet has increased in size and their staff's wages have risen. The Ontario Conservative government has a double standard. If you are a well-placed Tory providing direct political assistance to help the government get elected, you will be rewarded. But if you are a corrections officer or an environmental officer or a nurse or a teacher or a doctor or somebody who's providing direct service to the public, you will not be rewarded, you will be insulted. By comparison, the government in August quietly approved raises of up to 30% for the 326 political aides who work as communication assistants, chiefs of staff and policy advisers to the province's 25 cabinet ministers. Yet it was just announced that there are going to be more cuts coming in every other sector. So again we have a double standard.

I would also like to remind this House that on this side we have believed in tax protection and we have believed in tax cuts, in the right order. It was in 1989 that we had our last balanced budget, and it was under the Liberal government.

Sustained economic development means that we need to balance fiscal responsibility with a social conscience. Yes, it is the trend around this country, this continent, but if all those hikes in user fees, licence fees and services you must pay for—I wonder where the tax cuts come into play as we raise all the other elements of what I consider are subversive tax cuts. Gambling money is, in my humble opinion, another form of taxation.

In this House, we're all members who have been voted in to protect the interests of the people who elected us. I am wary about the words said by this government and the actions taken.

I had an opportunity to speak with the honourable Mr Lawrence Summers, the Secretary of the Treasury of the

United States. He spoke about sustainable economic development, and we had a long discussion about the more progressive approach to have adequate affordable housing, to ensure that good resources are put towards public education, good health care and the environment. He was adamant about the priorities: Get the fiscal house in order and look after the social needs that sustain economic development, and then you have the tax cuts.

Fiscal responsibility, and not just the appearance of fiscal responsibility, is what I believe in, and that's what we on this side of the House believe in.

There are many examples of how the actions do not follow the words of fiscal responsibility on the other side of the House. Yes, let's get our fiscal house in order, but in reality and not in words.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Churley: I appreciate the comments made by the members for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and Sarnia-Lambton. With all due respect, I have to start by setting the record straight on the so-called balanced budget of 1989-90. I recall, when we won the government in 1990, being told that there was a balanced budget but coming into office and the horror of opening up the books and day after day finding that the so-called balanced numbers were going up and up and up. I believe it was \$2 billion or something.

Hon Mr Turnbull: It was two and a half.

Ms Churley: It was \$2.5 billion, was it? So we did start off with a bad recession coming—let's face it, there really was—and we started in the hole with a \$2.5-billion deficit. So let's get our numbers straight there.

What we all have to consider here as we talk about numbers—and they're flying back and forth across the House: who balanced the budget when and who didn't and whose fault this was and who's taking credit for that. For the people out there, all three who may be watching right now, one has to talk about solutions and to think about what people really want.

As the speakers mentioned, people do want tax cuts. I disagree with your approach. I don't think we should be borrowing money to give a tax cut to the wealthy when you're trying to pay down a deficit. I think that's wrong. On the other hand, I believe there should be strategic tax cuts when times are good that mainly benefit the poor and the middle class. You're doing the opposite.

The other thing these speakers mentioned is the social deficit, which you are paying no attention to. We have to consider, when we think about tax breaks, what our taxes pay for. Health and education are two.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I would like to congratulate my colleague the member for Sarnia-Lambton for her debate. I met with her this morning and I was delighted to have a good conversation with her. But I just wanted to get on record the correct figures.

In 1989, the Liberal government of the day projected a budget deficit of \$550 million—a deficit. In fact, they got an unusual transfer from the federal government of \$888 million. I have the numbers emblazoned in my mind. That would indicate, taking away from that unusual

transfer which they weren't anticipating, that they should have had a surplus of \$330 million given to them by the federal government. In fact, they managed a \$90 million surplus, supposedly. I don't know what they would have done if they hadn't got the money. They'd have been even further in the hole than the \$550 million they planned.

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But in point of fact they'd used a technique known as pre-flow. That means they took payments that they were supposed to recognize the next fiscal year and took them into that fiscal year and delayed payments they should have been making to other institutions to the following year. This is known as pre-flow. Then the NDP, when they became the government—not that I would ever want to be known as defending them—inherited a \$2.5-billion deficit, and nobody understood how it had happened, except the Provincial Auditor commented and so did a lot of other financial experts about the financial jiggery-pokery that the Liberals got into. They never had a balanced budget ever in the five years that they were government.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I want to thank the minister from Don Valley West for that history lesson. It's very important, and I think we should go on record as saying that your windfall was \$1.7 billion for selling a highway. I guess you get to balance your budget. Oops, sorry, it's not balanced yet. You couldn't do it with an extra \$1.7 billion.

I also want to talk to my colleagues on this side for their kind words and understanding. I think we have to start bringing a little bit of sanity into the debate by simply saying: "Here are the ideas. Let's talk about whether or not we really are going to balance that deficit." Did you have the opportunity to balance the budget beforehand? Yes. Did you take that opportunity? No. What did you do? You borrowed money to put on to the debt. Your intent was to make the debt higher. The next thing that you have to do is, you're going to have to turn around and wait until the legislation gets put down, until you put the legislation in.

My question is very simple: Why would you not have put in this legislation in the first round of deficit? You could have done this in the first round. In your first term of office you had the opportunity to do that. Did it happen? No, not at all.

Somebody on the other side made the comment about having substance. Let's look at the circumstances behind the situation that we're faced with, the circumstances behind this situation that's been created. Each time those things happen, you're looking at a circumstance and you don't want to face the reality. You had an opportunity to balance the budget an awful lot earlier than you did, but you had to wait because you wanted to put that extra money on to the debt.

Now you're going to say to us that we've got to make up that difference. How do we make up that difference? User fees. How many user fees have been introduced by this government? Tons and tons. You want to talk about

previous governments that have added the taxes. Let's put those taxes up; let's count how many times user fees have gone up since this government has been in power.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): Certainly in this debate I think we should focus on what we're dealing with here. I don't think the member from Sarnia-Lambton did focus on that. The question is the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act.

All we've heard is that they do agree with the balanced budget, but when it comes to taxpayer protection, they're not in agreement because, quite frankly, they've said that they don't believe in tax cuts; they don't believe in any protection for taxpayers. I don't think that's the right policy. When you look at it, even the federal government may be getting the message from the public, because they don't lead by example, they basically follow. They realize that what we see here is that the federal government has come to the conclusion, at least through Paul Martin—if you believe that's their position—that there should be some tax cuts.

When you listen to the Prime Minister, he basically says, "If you don't like the tax situation in this country, leave." That's a real attitude in terms of saying, "Leave the country," rather than do something about it. That's basically the message we're getting from the member from Sarnia-Lambton. She's saying: "We're not going to be involved with this taxpayer protection. We don't believe in that." But with respect to balanced budget, they say that you don't need any legislation to deal with that.

That's one thing that we do need to have here. We need balanced budget legislation because we're looking at a tremendous amount of debt that was inherited by this government, over \$100 billion in debt. I think the member from Sarnia-Lambton has missed the point. We do need the protection. We have kept our promise and that's why we got elected and the members on the opposition on the other side.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs Dombrowsky: I want to pick up on the word that I heard the previous speaker refer to more than once and that is the "protection" of the taxpayer. I certainly believe that as a government we have a responsibility to protect the taxpayer, but I think that protection goes beyond just looking at the bottom line in a ledger. That seems to be the only kind of protection you understand over there.

I'm worried about protecting the people who are in line to get into an emergency room—not the lineups in the emergency room, the people in line to get into the emergency room. I'm worried about protecting those students who require special services in school who are not able to access them, because the board does not have the resources that they require. I'm worried about protecting our environment, protecting the future of my children and the children of Ontario, to ensure that they have a safe and healthy environment in which to live, safe water to drink, air to breathe. That's what I'm worried about protecting.

I'm worried about protecting the roads in the province, instead of downloading them to municipalities that can't afford to maintain them. When you talk about protecting the taxpayer, let's look at protection in its fullest sense, not just a ledger sense but in the way we provide service to the people of the province.

I heard across the way tonight the term that they inherited such a "mess" five years ago. We have a mess now. It's worse now than it was five years ago. Accept that, please, accept that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tascona: I'm pleased to join the debate with respect to the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, 1999. I'm very proud to say that that's another promise made and a promise kept. That's what I think the people are looking for with respect to this government.

When you talk about a Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, this government has stood behind that for the four years that I've been a member of this government and we're on the verge of balancing the books.

In dealing with this debate, I want to refer to why we need taxpayer protection and why we need a balanced budget act. I want to refer to an article that was put in the *Ottawa Sun* editorial, December 21, 1998. It says:

"Prime Minister Chretien would do well to steal a page from Ontario's Common Sense Revolution and introduce his own mandatory balanced budget legislation.

"Balancing the government's books has taken years of pain and sacrifice and it would be a pity to allow some future government to fritter the hard-fought gains away by slipping back into the shortsighted and dangerous practice of deficit financing.

"Imagine where this province or this country would be today had earlier governments offered the foresight to get out of hock and balance the books, enshrining in law the measures needed to keep future governments from buying votes today with tomorrow's money.

"There could be no greater gesture to those who have borne the real cost of balancing the books in the past 10 years than to protect taxpayers from a return to the days of red ink and higher tax bills."

We know that Prime Minister Chretien has done nothing of the sort. What he's talking about today—if you can make out what he's talking about, because he says one thing one day and he says another thing the other day—is that maybe they're going to give us tax cuts, maybe they're going to give us some debt refinancing, maybe they're going to spend more money. As you know, Mr Speaker, being a Liberal, probably what we're going to see is more spending. That's where I think that we have a very fundamental difference between this government's philosophy and what the federal government's philosophy is.

I think that's even more enunciated with respect to taxpayer protection. When the Prime Minister of this country comes out and says, "If you don't like this way it is in this country, you don't like the way the tax system is, just leave the country," that's a heck of a thing to say

with respect to fellow Canadians who have worked very hard. They have put this country in a tremendous amount of debt. They balanced the books, essentially on the backs of the provinces.

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What this government is looking at, in terms of a balanced budget—and I want to deal with the components of this bill as to why we need balanced budget legislation. In the past 35 years, Ontario has balanced its books or had surpluses only four times, in 1965-66, 1966-67 and 1969-70 under Tory governments, and then in 1989-90 under a Liberal government.

The fact is, every child in Ontario is born bearing a combined federal and provincial debt load of \$28,711, \$9,572 for Ontario and \$19,139 for the federal government. That's a significant amount of debt. By the end of March 1999, our debt reached \$109 billion, more than 50 times greater than our debt in 1964, eating up crucial revenues that could be used to pay for services for Ontarians. That's why we need balanced budget legislation.

From what I understand, Ontario is spending more than \$18,000 per minute just to service its debt. A fundamental fact the public has to realize is that we're still dealing with debt that was left to this government by the Liberals and the NDP. Public debt interest is \$9.8 billion in 1999-2000, almost half of what the province will spend on important services such as health care, which is \$20.2 billion in 1999-2000. What could we be doing with that money? We could certainly be doing a lot better than putting it into debt interest. We could hire 10,000 more nurses over the next two years. We could expand home care beyond the original long-term-care plan. There are numerous other examples, but one area we could invest in is building and modernizing universities and colleges.

The debt expenses we have are significant, and that's why Ontarians need balanced budget legislation. What we've heard from the other side tonight is, "Why do you need legislation?" We need legislation, obviously, because governments haven't listened to taxpayers. I think taxpayers want governments to live within their means, and certainly we promised that that was something we would bring in. We're not like the provincial Liberals, who would back off on a promise. We basically have lived up to our promises. That is the hallmark of this government, and it brings credibility to political life in this province.

With respect to taxpayer protection, one only has to ask, "Why does Ontario need taxpayer protection?" I think we've heard here tonight the amount of taxes Ontarians pay, not only to the provincial government but also to the federal government. What we've seen here is that from 1985 to 1995, Ontario taxpayers faced 65 provincial tax increases. I want to give you some examples to show the way that governments in the past, the provincial Liberals and the NDP, treated taxpayers. They treated them with total disrespect.

In 1985 the Ontario personal income tax rate increased to 50% of the basic federal tax. In the same year, the

federal Liberals put a surtax of 3% on Ontario tax in excess of \$5,000. In 1988 they increased the gasoline tax by one cent per litre and the retail tax rate went up 1% to 8%. Those are fundamental taxes that we faced and are dealing with today. Then in 1989 the gasoline tax increased by another two cents per litre and the Ontario provincial income tax rate increased to 53% of the basic federal tax. In 1989 we also had the employer health tax levied on all Ontario employers. In 1991 the gasoline and diesel fuel tax increased by 3.4 cents per litre and the Ontario surtax rate increased from 10% to 14% of Ontario tax in excess of \$10,000. In 1992 the Ontario provincial income tax rate increased to 54.5% of the basic federal tax and then to 55% in 1993. Is it any wonder the provincial economy went in the tank between 1989 and 1995? When you tax people in their basic personal income tax, when you increase gasoline taxes the way they were increased and when you also put an employer health tax levy on employers at a time when they should be getting breaks in terms of fair economic policy, taxation policies from government, that's why the provincial economy went in the tank.

There's been criticism here tonight with respect to why there would be tax cuts. What seems to be missed from the other side is that tax revenue comes from taxpayers. It just doesn't come out of the sky; it comes from people's hard-earned dollars. It's their money. There is only one taxpayer.

I would say that our tax cut policy was used as a stimulant to get the economy going and I think it's obvious what's happened. We have the top economy in this country. It's also been leading with respect to a number of US states in the north and the Midwest. We're doing far better than they are. That has increased jobs, as we talked about tonight, in excess of 600,000.

I think it's very fundamental to the policy that we've set. What I think the business community is seeing in my area of Simcoe county—and the member for Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop—is tremendous growth. What we're seeing is that growth coming into new jobs, tremendous investment in the construction industry, new homes, tremendous furniture buying. What we're seeing is tremendous growth also in the education sector and in the health care sector. You can't have a strong health care sector or an education system without a strong economy. It just doesn't add up.

So I would say that this province under this government has lived up to its promises. The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act is what the taxpayers want and that's why we got re-elected. I'm very proud to be back as MPP for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, on that note.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Parsons: "Tax cuts create jobs": We keep hearing that; I wish it was true. I know there are statistics that prove it's true, but I know there are lies and there are darned lies and then there are statistics.

I'd like to tell you about a woman who came and spoke to me a few months ago. She had a full-time job, a

five-day-a-week job that included medical benefits. She lost that when the company closed. She now works four part-time jobs, a total of four jobs over seven days a week, and uses a large portion of it to pay for medicine that used to be funded under her plan. But she said to me that what really bothers her is that she is a success story. She knows she's never home at night, she knows she's not home on weekends and she knows that over half the money she makes now goes to medicine, but statistically she lost one job, she's acquired four, so she's produced three of the wonderful new jobs for Ontario. But she doesn't feel like a success. She certainly does not feel like a success.

I hear about the tax cuts and I look at the list for my area: Unihost closing, 70 employees; Nortel, 722 jobs; Zellers, 25; all the ambulance workers in our area given layoff notices; Bell Canada, 40 jobs gone from our area; Deloro Stellite, 36 jobs; Bata Norimco, 209 jobs. The other side lists the new jobs for my area and it's blank.

I think there are more jobs in our area, lots and lots of part-time, minimum-wage jobs. Lay off two nurses at the hospital, replace them with five part-time: There are three more new jobs for Ontario. It is misleading to infer that the new jobs are real jobs.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'd like to compliment my colleague, the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, on a very good speech pointing out the consistency of our government. We did, as he said, live up to our commitments, something that other governments haven't done.

I'd like to point out as well that tonight we've been listening to a lot of the opposition comments and it has become quite clear to me, as I'm sure it has to the viewers, that they talk out of both sides of their mouths. You don't like the bill but you're going to support it, right? Why is that?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Because they're Liberals.

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes, because they're Liberals. They don't have any principles.

They talked about the fact that we didn't come back here until October. The reason we didn't come back until October—

Mr Crozier: You don't even know what a principle is.

Mr Wettlaufer: —as they bloody well know, was because the chamber was under renovations.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Essex will come to order.

Mr Crozier: Why don't you talk about education and health care?

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. The member for Essex will come to order.

Member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr Wettlaufer: It's too bad, you know, when you touch a nerve that they have to go rangy over on the opposite side. It really is too bad.

I would like to point out a couple of other things here. They talked about the AAA rating that their government

enjoyed. That was wonderful, but do you know the thing you don't understand? It's called simple economics. There is a difference between the Bank of Canada borrowing rate and what you have to pay as a province to borrow. Do you know, we are paying less differential than what your government did. Do you know what that would mean in terms of actual dollars in interest that our

government would have to pay? It would mean another \$500 million a year.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Thank goodness it's 9:30 of the clock. We will adjourn this House until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2132.

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Tuesday 16 November 1999

Mardi 16 novembre 1999



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 novembre 1999

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My statement today is in the form of a direct plea to the Minister of Education for her to understand that the province's funding for special education simply is not working for children in my riding, and it's also an urgent call for her to rectify the funding problem now so that children will not be deprived of the support they deserve in our schools.

The situation is particularly acute for the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board, a board that has clearly documented the needs for the children in their system to the satisfaction of the ministry but was then shocked to learn that no new money to meet those needs was forthcoming. This was worked on in good faith as part of the intensive effort by the Catholic board's special education staff, despite their real concerns about the rigorous and in many cases inappropriate student profiles required by the ministry before any funding will be approved. Yet it appears to have all been for naught. As Joleene Kemp, chair of the Thunder Bay Catholic board, put it to you, Minister, in a letter last month, "Why was such a huge task undertaken that yielded nothing but high expectations on the part of parents and dashed hopes on the part of the board?"

The Thunder Bay board is in a terrible position, because they have employed the needed additional support persons by transferring money from a reserve fund, money that is now gone and will only pay wages up to December. The clock is ticking.

The Catholic board is very keen to work with you, Minister, on this urgent matter, and I hope you take them up on their offer so that all students in need of special support can continue to receive the education they need and deserve regardless of their own personal challenges.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I want to welcome the representatives of Ontario's police forces who are here at Queen's Park for the third annual lobby day. This morning I met with officers from the Waterloo region police, and I welcome the opportunity to further

develop the bond of co-operation and partnership as we work to strengthen policing in this province.

In September, I joined the celebration of another important partnership as 20 officers from the former police departments of Fergus, Harriston and Palmerston were sworn in as Ontario Provincial Police officers. This was a historic ceremony, because Wellington became the first county in Ontario to engage the OPP in a long-term contract for policing services. The occasion was best captured by Mr Murray Langdon, chairman of the Wellington County Police Services Board, who said, "The consent to abolish means the end to three fine police services which have served with distinction for more than 100 years, but it also means the start of county-wide policing—making Wellington county a leader in the province." I am certain that the citizens and taxpayers of Wellington county will benefit immensely from this new partnership for community safety.

The work of the OPP is vital and I will continue to be their strong supporter. This includes working with the Wellington OPP force and the province to address the need to have greater access to services provided by justices of the peace in our area.

I would like to say in closing, to the new OPP of Wellington county and to police officers in Waterloo region and throughout Ontario, you have our sincere thanks.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): On November 5, 1999, the United Nations human rights committee released the decision which said that Canada, and specifically Ontario, violates a 1976 international human rights covenant by funding Catholic but not other religious-based schools.

The ruling was seen as vindication of those who support faith-based schools that the present position of the Ontario government is unfair and discriminatory.

In the ruling, the UN said that differences in treatment between Roman Catholic religious schools, which are publicly funded as a distinct part of the public education system, and schools of other religions, which are private by necessity, cannot be considered reasonable and objective.

The UN also gave Canada 90 days either to comply with the ruling or to propose a remedy.

Those who are urging compliance with this UN decision are not advocating removal of funding from the

Catholic system, but rather extending funding to all independent denominational schools.

Although the UN resolution calls for compliance or a proposed remedy within 90 days, the Ontario government quickly indicated that it would not be complying with this landmark ruling. Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories do not discriminate on the basis of religion in allocating education funding. Indeed, nowhere else in the western world does a government provide public funding to one religious denomination and not to others.

I now call on the government of Ontario to respond in a positive way to this United Nations human rights committee ruling.

1340

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to share with the House today, and in fact the province, a very excellent prevention and promotion program developed by a constituent of mine, Mr Ross Mervyn.

Mr Mervyn is a retired Algoma Steel worker and a volunteer in the prison system, both in Canada and the USA. He has recognized that drugs are a major problem in our society today, with lives ruined and wasted, and high medical costs to the public health system. Drugs result, he says, in a lot of crime. In fact, 70% of crime is drug- or alcohol-related, with a high cost of incarceration of about \$50,000 per year.

Mr Mervyn has put together a program that was primarily developed by himself, and he has been its driving force. Following an introduction and some background to groups in various communities, a stand-up presentation is given, followed by a video. The video covers interviews with actual prison inmates. A question-and-answer period then follows. This program has proved to be very successful in many communities across the USA and Canada.

Mr Mervyn has been recognized by almost every level of government for the work he has done on this program. It is, as I said, essentially a prevention and promotion program, something we should be doing more of, it seems to me, if we're going to keep people out of trouble before they get into it.

If you're interested in this program, you could call my office either here in Toronto or in Sault Ste Marie, or call Mr Mervyn at (705) 253-0503.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): This government stands firmly on the side of victims of crime rather than the offenders. We stand behind those who protect our families and serve our communities. Many Ontario citizens also work tirelessly to support our law enforcement agencies.

Today I would like to recognize one such agency, the Neighbourhood Watch of Waterloo region. Working in partnership with the Waterloo regional police, this organization is on the leading edge of crime prevention. Through the hard work of many volunteers and a grant

from the Partners Against Crime program, they have developed a state-of-the-art community alert system. This system dials the homes of Neighbourhood Watch members and alerts them with a recorded message about break and enters, vandalism, vehicle thefts and other non-violent crime in their neighbourhoods. Using state-of-the-art software, this group serves as the eyes and ears of the local police.

The Neighbourhood Watch program works. The Waterloo regional police have recognized the contribution of Neighbourhood Watch since 1990 with an office in each detachment.

Today I would like to thank Chief Larry Gravill and members of the Waterloo Regional Police Service as well as Marietta Gassewitz from Neighbourhood Watch for their dedication to this program. I would also like to recognize the over 28,000 Neighbourhood Watch members in the Waterloo region who take an active part in this program.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): This is directed to the Minister of Education. Students, parents and grandparents in Sault Ste Marie and Algoma-Manitoulin are desperately trying to find a way to prevent the closure of 10 schools.

The Harris government cutbacks to education are forcing the Algoma District School Board to look at closing these schools. To have you stand in this Legislature and to hear you blame the school board for these closures is both irresponsible and not factual.

Five of the schools on the verge of closing are in the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin. These schools are in the communities of Spanish, Batchawana Bay, Desbarats, Searchmont and Elliot Lake. The students in these communities should not be shipped out of their hometowns or forced into portables. Some of these students would be forced to ride a bus for over an hour a day. This is unacceptable. The people of Algoma-Manitoulin deserve quality, accessible education.

Minister, I call on you to reclassify the Algoma District School Board as a low-density board. It is. Look at a map. I am currently receiving letters from concerned parents from all corners of Algoma demanding that your ministry halt its plans to close over 20% of the schools in this district. Are these Ontario's tax dollars at work? Take action now so that 2,000 students won't be forced on to buses and so that they can remain in the classrooms in their own home communities.

Do the right thing. Give the funding back that your government has stolen from the children of Ontario.

POLICE BRAVERY AWARDS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): It is my honour to bring to the attention of the House the awarding of the Ontario Medal for Police Bravery to two London police officers, constables Bruce Miller and Brad Merrison. The

award was made last week by Lieutenant Governor Hilary Weston and Solicitor General David Tsubouchi for actions in August 1998. The two officers pulled two elderly men from a burning home on English Street in London. The fire was one of a string of arsons that occurred in our city last summer.

Constables Miller and Merrison also received citations from the London Police Services Board and a Canadian Police Association Award of Excellence for Ontario for what they did. When the officers arrived at the scene, smoke was pouring out of the two-storey home and they could hear screams coming from inside the house. They found an 80-year-old man about two metres from the back door and another older man calling for help from another room. Both officers had to be treated for smoke inhalation after the rescue. The fires were found to be the work of an arsonist.

What these officers did on that occasion is typical of what the men and women of our police services do, day after day, year after year, to make our province safe for all.

Constable Miller is with us in the gallery today. I know that all members of the House will want to join with me in recognizing constables Miller and Merrison on their outstanding achievements.

ONTARIO STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'd like to take this opportunity to commend the Hamilton-Wentworth regional police for their proactive approach to youth crime. I'll be speaking more about this tonight in the debate.

My statement today is addressed to the minister responsible for colleges and universities. I'm sure all the members were shocked to read the press of November 6, in which it was reported that the RCMP had charged a Toronto private vocational school with fraud and conspiracy to commit fraud. Over \$18 million in loans from the Ontario student assistance program and the Canada student loans program, both programs administered by this government, have apparently been obtained fraudulently by this school using the names of over 1,000 students not actually attending this institution.

In my view, \$18.32 million is a very significant amount of money. In fact, it represents 3% of total OSAP spending for 1998-99. It seems very clear that we have another classic example of the government having its priorities upside-down. While they focus on ganging up on squeegee kids, they ignore their responsibility to practise diligence in the administration of these funds.

It's a shame and a disgrace that legitimate students and institutions are being underfunded while this kind of scheme goes undetected by the government. It is not as if they weren't warned. In the 1997 Provincial Auditor's report he warned, "The risk of abuse of this program is high." Why was this warning ignored? Why haven't the

necessary checks been put in place? How can the students of this province trust this government?

PEEL REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I stand to join with my colleagues in support of the men and women who serve in our police forces.

This year, the Peel Regional Police Service is commemorating its 25th anniversary after the amalgamation of the police forces from Chinguacousy, Brampton, Mississauga, Port Credit and Streetsville.

Under the admirable leadership of Chief Noel Catney, the Peel Regional Police Service has been recognized for excellence in conduct and ethics and has won over 300 provincial, national and international awards for innovation, crime resolution and crime prevention.

In September, constables Wayne Drew and Dave Haggarty of the Peel force finished first and second in the main skills event at the inaugural greater Toronto regional police motorcycle competition.

The outstanding work done by the Peel police has contributed to the positive relationship between officers and members of my constituency. It is no wonder that local citizens of Peel continue to show their strong support for our police officers.

Last Friday, as part of our government's commitment to put 1,000 new front-line police officers on our streets, the Peel Regional Police Service held a swearing-in ceremony for 36 new officers.

I would like to personally congratulate these new officers and, at the same time, offer my deep gratitude to all the men and women on the Peel Regional Police Service and their families for the excellent work they're doing to make Ontario one of the best places to live, work and raise our families.

1350

ANNUAL REPORT, PROVINCIAL AUDITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today I have laid upon the table the 1999 annual report of the Provincial Auditor.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would also like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today a number of guests from the Office of the Provincial Auditor, including the Provincial Auditor, Erik Peters, and Ken Leishman, the assistant Provincial Auditor, as well as some of the directors. Please join me in welcoming our special guests.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MORE TAX CUTS FOR JOBS, GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 RÉDUISANT DE NOUVEAU LES IMPÔTS POUR STIMULER L'EMPLOI, LA CROISSANCE ET LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario / Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 1999 et à apporter d'autres modifications à diverses lois en vue de favoriser un climat propice à l'emploi, à la croissance et à la prospérité en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The Minister of Finance for a short explanation.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Just very briefly, this bill, if passed, will deliver of course on the first instalment of the 20% income tax cut referred to in this past May's budget. It will take care of the Ontario child care supplement for working families. It will extend and expand the land transfer tax refund on first-time homebuyers of new homes.

It will deliver on the retail sales tax rebate on building materials for farmers. It will provide enhanced capital tax exemption for small businesses. It will provide incentives for businesses hiring apprentices. It will present incentives for Ontario school bus safety.

It will also level the playing field in the area of property taxation for newly constructed commercial and industrial properties, and it will strengthen the regulatory powers of the Ontario Securities Commission, which are both—

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat. The Minister of Finance will know it is supposed to be a short explanation.

GREAT LAKES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION ENVIRONNEMENTALE DES GRANDS LACS

Mr Ouellette moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to regulate the discharge of ballast water in the Great Lakes / Projet de loi 15, Loi réglementant le déchargement de l'eau de lest dans les Grands Lacs.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A short explanation from the member for Oshawa.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): In order to reduce the occurrence of invading species, the bill prohibits ocean-going vessels on the Great Lakes system from

docking in Ontario if they have not complied with the ballast water control guidelines prescribed by regulation.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr Gilchrist and Mr Wettlaufer exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Gilchrist assumes ballot item 78 and Mr Wettlaufer assumes ballot item 14.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I rise today with good news for the health and safety of Ontario workers. For the first time in 13 years, the exposure limits for hazardous chemical substances used in our province's workplaces will be updated.

Workers in Ontario deserve to be protected by exposure limits that are current and up to date. Down the road, it will mean fewer occupational illnesses among workers and lower compensation costs for employers. Over the next 90 days, our government will educate industry and labour about the mandatory new exposure limits.

I will also be meeting with both labour and industry to discuss updating occupational exposure limits on a regular basis. I give you my commitment as minister that we will work to keep occupational exposure limits current. Most of the new limits we are proposing today are those recommended by the internationally recognized American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists. More than 80 countries, most Canadian provinces, 36 American states and the federal government use these limits, and many Ontario companies implement them today voluntarily.

I emphasize that compliance with the new occupational exposure limits will be required, and it will be enforced. When the new limits are in place, Ontario will not only be up to date, it will be ahead of the pack. That's because we are bringing an additional 69 hazardous substances under regulations for the first time in Ontario's history. By doing so, Ontario is regulating occupational exposure to a significantly higher number of hazardous chemicals than the majority of jurisdictions around the globe.

Responsible, reasonable, progressive change: That's good for investment, that's good for productivity, and it goes without saying that it's good for the working men and women who handle these chemicals on a day-to-day basis.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I rise today to congratulate the minister for taking a step 13 years later. You'll realize that 13 years ago the Liberals added to this list and the gap between adding to this list has been far too long. I'm glad you learned from the Liberal government of 13 years ago. I'm glad you're finally doing this but you know, Minister, there is still so much more to be done, and although this is just simply a very, very small step, you have been confronted by several other groups with several other initiatives that we would have hoped you would have acted upon already.

For example, I talk about the workplace carcinoma committee, which you are aware of, on which you've met with the United Steelworkers of America and the Canadian Auto Workers, but the reality is your government so far has been negligent in not establishing this carcinoma committee. This committee will save lives. As you know, 9% of the people who go to work every year die because of workplace conditions. We know that's avoidable. Workers know that's avoidable. Unions know that's avoidable. Companies know that's avoidable.

The reality is Cancer Care Ontario has urged you over the past several years to establish this workplace carcinoma committee. If in fact your commitment is to the health and safety of workers, I suggest that tomorrow you stand up in the Legislature and announce that there will be the establishment of a workplace carcinoma committee.

I look at the recommendations from the coroner's jury with regard to the tragic deaths of John Hewson and Robert LaPolice. We ask that you act on those recommendations, certainly the second recommendation, and I read from the report:

"That the government of Ontario completes as soon as possible the review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act initiated in 1997. The revised act should be given the highest priority on the legislative agenda."

I would like you to take that to the P and P committee and suggest to them that instead of squeegee legislation, they should be finalizing this so that indeed your government will save lives in the workplace.

1400

I would suggest as well that you learn from the father of Dave Ellis, the 18-year-old student who died on his second day on the job trying to get some money to go to university. Rob Ellis, his father, has raised a number of issues around workplace death causes, including prevention, enforcement, prosecution, accountability and workplace insurance. Certainly, some of these issues must be addressed by your government and by you as the minister as quickly as possible.

That brings me to the next item that I implore you to ensure passes through the House very quickly, and that's

my colleague Mike Gravelle's Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students.

I would suggest to you, Minister, to listen to the words of Rob Ellis, who said: "It is time that students got over simply asking, 'How much will I make and how many hours will I work?' They should be asking the important question, 'Is the workplace safe?'"

Mr Gravelle's bill will ensure that students are provided with the opportunity to ensure that they are brought up to date on what is expected of the employers, of the employees and of the workplace. I would suggest, I would hope, I would plead that you meet with Mr Gravelle to ensure that this will happen, that this bill will pass through the House quickly and that it will become law for Ontario workers.

I would suggest as well that you look at your own record of accountability when it comes to what you've done. Bill 49 changes the Employment Standards Act, which erodes minimum provisions for overtime pay; Bill 99 makes changes to WCB and cuts benefits to injured workers; Bill 136, the public sector union legislation, strips bargaining rights; Bill 31, the construction, trade and workplace bill, eliminates protection for construction unions. You've cut your occupational health laboratory, chest clinic and materials, testing laboratories, employment practice operations; office of mediation, cut by 23%; office of arbitration, cut.

The reality is, as the new Minister of Labour you have a lot of work to do correcting the faults of your government over the course of the last four years.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me first of all, since this is my first opportunity in addressing the new minister, offer to him my personal congratulations on his ascension to the cabinet. I think I would have been one of those who, when there were long-shot odds being offered up, would have taken that long-shot odd that if anybody could have accomplished getting into cabinet from where you were, you would have. Personally, I'm pleased to see it happened.

Let me also identify that as probably being the last time I intend to be nice to you in this place, beginning with your opening comment, Minister, that you rise with good news for the health and safety of Ontario workers. You haven't been here long enough to develop your own reputation but, let me tell you, the one that your predecessors have left for you causes Ontario workers, the second any Minister of Labour stands up, to have shivers down their spine. There's absolutely nothing this government has done that has helped or made things better for the working people of Ontario.

Some of the litany of those issues has been raised and I intend to raise more of them in the next few minutes. Specifically with regard to the announcement you're making, Minister, it would have been nice if you had at least acknowledged the fact that the reason you're doing this is because of the unrelenting work and effort of the labour movement in lobbying your government and your ministry, particularly your predecessors, to make these moves. You know that these moves do not achieve all

that the labour movement feels needs to be done in terms of protecting workers. You didn't say anything about that.

In fairness, if you're trying to create a new atmosphere in your ministry, and I hear that you are, then I would strongly suggest that when you've got credit to be given out there in terms of things that are to be changed, you offer it up.

The labour movement has made this a cornerstone, particularly the Ontario Federation of Labour. Under the leadership of Wayne Samuelson, they have done everything they can to put this front and centre, and you failed to even acknowledge that they had anything at all to do with it. The reality is that without them, you wouldn't be making even this meagre announcement that you are making today.

Further, you go on to say that down the road it will mean fewer occupational illnesses among workers and lower compensation costs for employers. Of course, we know that the lower compensation costs for employers is your number one priority. It hasn't been that long since we watched the debacle of Bill 99, which ripped away \$15 billion in money that would be owed to injured workers, only to see your government, Minister, give \$6 billion of that back to employers, who don't need it. Tell that to the families in Sarnia, where workers have died and family members are dying from exposures that were brought from the workplace to home. Tell them that you're doing wonderful things for the people of Ontario, for the workers of Ontario.

Bill 15: You talk about caring about compensation. We finally, under the NDP, had a situation where the WCB had 50% of the seats designated for workers and their representatives: just justice, fairness. Your government wiped that out and now we're back to the bad old days where employers and their friends and cronies form the majority of seats on the board of what you call WSIB, thereby pulling injured workers right out of the equation. That's the way you've dealt with workers.

What else have you done in this province? You can't deal with this announcement in isolation. The Workplace Health and Safety Agency, which your government took great pride in extinguishing, again, was an agency dedicated to training employers and employees in how to provide a safe workplace and how to avoid exposures and illnesses and accidents and death. And yes, 50% of those seats were guaranteed for workers and their representatives. But you weren't satisfied with just wiping out fairness there. You wiped out the whole thing, you killed it, and you put it back inside the WCB, where it had failed for 50 years. That's the track record of this government.

You killed the Occupational Disease Panel, a jewel in the crown of the legislation that we had in this province. We had advocacy from around the world saying: "Please, don't kill this. It's the model we're trying to get in place in our workplace and in our state or province."

It allowed arm's length identification of exposures to the harm that it can do to workers. Your government

killed that, Minister. You didn't think it was important enough to provide the kind of expertise the ODP did, and then somehow you expect to stand up today and get a big fanfare. It's not going to happen. You've got to change your record, Minister.

GRANDVIEW TRAINING SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move a resolution regarding an official apology to the survivors of Grandview and for a representative from each caucus to make remarks on the resolution.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Flaherty: I move:

That this House, on behalf of Ontario and pursuant to the 1994 agreement reached with the Grandview Survivors Support Group, apologizes and expresses sincere regret for the harm caused by the physical, sexual and psychological abuse at the Ontario Training School for Girls, Galt, also known as Grandview, in Cambridge, Ontario, between the 1930s to the 1970s; and

That this House acknowledges that the abuse suffered by the students at Grandview, who bear no responsibility for the abuse they suffered, caused lifelong physical and emotional pain, distress and trauma to the women themselves and to their families and community and that such abuse of children is deplorable and intolerable.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1410

Hon Mr Flaherty: I rise on behalf of this assembly and this government to address a serious issue involving victims of abuse. It involved the horrible abuse of more than 300 young women at the Ontario Training School for Girls, Galt, also known as Grandview, located in Cambridge, Ontario. The school opened in 1932 and closed in 1976.

The Grandview survivors suffered physical, sexual and psychological abuse at the hands of staff at the school who were entrusted with their care. These horrendous acts not only traumatized the women themselves, but also their families and the community.

I wish to express on behalf of the Legislative Assembly sincere regret for and condemnation of these events.

While the past cannot be changed, we have endeavoured to create a process to give a voice to those directly affected.

The province consulted and negotiated an agreement with the Grandview Survivors Support Group, signed in 1994, that we hope has offered opportunities to heal and to introduce real hope for a better future. The agreement is based on recognition that abuse or mistreatment cannot be tolerated or condoned. It's also based on the recognition that society has a direct responsibility to provide the supports necessary to facilitate the healing process for

survivors of sexual and institutionalized abuse, particularly when the abuse occurs in an institution housing children.

Hundreds of women with great courage and strength came forward and told their stories. Their allegations of sexual and physical abuse were adjudicated and the truth of their claims was acknowledged. Compensation was awarded. However, that doesn't change the fact that the pain they endured can never be erased. What we seek to do today is to attempt to bring a further measure of closure to these survivors.

My predecessor the former Attorney General has written personal letters to those survivors who so requested to express our regret. This statement fulfills the government's final commitment to these survivors.

The abuse at Grandview should never have happened and there can be no excuse or justification for it. It is a source of shame for all of us. The survivors bear no responsibility for the abuse that they suffered. This Legislature and all of its elected members acknowledge it and apologize.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I rise today on behalf of the official opposition in this House to speak to this resolution and to offer our apology. I regret that the survivors who have come to this House are sitting behind me in the gallery; I apologize that under the rules of parliamentary procedure, I have my back to you, but I am looking at you in spirit.

It is with great regret that I say it has come to my attention that a scintilla of a shadow lies over this apology and I'm compelled to bring it to the attention of this House.

Negotiations were over five years in the making for this settlement and a 60-page settlement resulted, which included, quite rightly, a public apology. Notwithstanding a five-year process and an eternal nightmare for the Grandview survivors, it is unfortunate that there was no consultation with the survivors as to the timing and the wording of this apology in the House. Most of the survivors could not simply pick up and zoom over to Toronto from wherever they lived in Ontario on a few days' notice. The survivors learned of the apology of today just last Friday, with the unceremonious arrival of a courier informing them of today's event. The undignified arrival of this courier unfortunately was a long time in coming, marked by a not insignificant delay subsequent to the conclusion of the criminal trials. That is unfortunate. That is no way to treat survivors. That said, I applaud the Attorney General for what he has done today. The horrible abuse at Grandview took place under someone else's watch. The school closed in 1976.

We are properly standing in the House today offering this act of imperfect contrition. This apology will never repair the damage done, but as I stand here and as we sit here, we can recommit ourselves individually and collectively to try to improve the safeguards against such horrific abuse in the future.

Finally, please allow me to offer on behalf of the official opposition to each and every one of the survivors

here in the House today and across Ontario our sincerest apology and regret for the years of unimaginable pain and suffering you have experienced. Both you and your families remain an extraordinary example to all Ontarians of perseverance and determination and courage. We wish and pray for your continued heroic survival, healing and, we hope, reconciliation with a tragic chapter in the history of this province.

I'm in no position to stand here and thank you for this perseverance. I'm in a position only to thank you for coming to this House and hearing our apology.

I would ask all members to rise and thank them now. Thank you.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): This day has been a long time coming for the survivors of the abuse that took place at the Grandview Training School for Girls, for their families and for their communities. This apology, while never sufficient to make up for the injuries done to them, marks nevertheless an historic day for this province. It recognizes government's and society's obligation not only to seek out cases of abuse but also to implement measures to prevent such abuse. It is essential for those of us who have participated in government to acknowledge that over many years people who were placed in good faith under the care of the government suffered as a result.

I must also comment for a moment on how the government has chosen to handle this matter today. We know that many of the survivors did not receive notice of this statement until last Thursday, some last Friday. This has not left enough time for many of those women to find a way to get here today. Many live in other parts of the province, have health problems, have family responsibilities or have to survive on very low incomes. In fact, their lawyer only received the wording of this apology yesterday. I wish that the government had handled this matter somewhat differently. I wish there had been more thought and attention paid to the needs of these survivors here today.

It is important that all three recognized parties in this Legislature recognize that we have all been in government and that we have all had responsibility for those who are in institutional settings, and that responsibility remains today.

This apology does not take away the pain; we are all aware that it does not. But what it does is make it clear that we are responsible, that the government of Ontario is responsible for what happened to those children. It reminds us that when we come upon situations where institutional abuse has occurred, as we did with the provincial schools for the deaf and the blind and in the case of St John's and St Joseph's, we must continue to have the courage to acknowledge our responsibility and to do what we can to redress the damage that has been done. Furthermore, as we recognize very clearly the suffering that occurred at Grandview over the years, we must renew our commitment to ensure that this kind of abuse does not occur again in the institutions over which we have authority.

1420

I would like to recognize for a moment the courage and the strength that have been required by those who came forward to break the silence about this abuse, and I would like to commend too the work of the Grandview Survivors Support Group, which played an essential role in collectively advocating for the interests of the survivors.

The long and painful healing process never really begins until the truth is told. For many of these women the truth had been blocked from their minds for many years, out of horror, out of embarrassment and in some cases out of necessity. But in an act of remarkable courage, they were willing to face and to relive the darkest periods of their lives.

We are here today to acknowledge publicly that as a society we recognize that you were wronged, that something was taken away from you that could never be replaced and never be made right. We are here today to say that you must remember that not one ounce of responsibility rests upon your shoulders for these acts. The guilty are those individuals who abused their positions of authority and took advantage of children who were incapable of defending themselves. Society too must take responsibility for not providing the safety and protection that every child deserves, for not protecting the most defenceless and vulnerable in our society.

We know that healing childhood abuse is a lifelong process that requires the active support of society. As these survivors begin to rebuild their lives, we must not forget that we all—members of this Legislature, men, women, society—have a responsibility to be part of the solution. Abuse is a social problem that requires urgent attention. We must dedicate ourselves to setting up systems, policies and procedures to ensure that this kind of abuse does not occur in the future. We must promote public education of the lasting injuries that abuse inflicts. We must pursue prevention and early detection. When abuse does occur, we must provide support immediately and ensure that abusers are punished.

On behalf of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, I would like to express to each and every survivor of Grandview our deepest and most sincere regret and apology for the years of pain and suffering that you have experienced. I commend you for your strength, your courage and determination and extend our hope that you are all able to put these terrible experiences behind you and lead meaningful and happy lives. I assure you that we will dedicate ourselves to ensuring that this kind of abuse does not ever happen again in our province.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question today is for the Attorney General.

Today the auditor released his report and he provides a very damning indictment of your government's handling of the Family Responsibility Office. He tells us that there exist today 128,000 cases in arrears. He tells us that two thirds of the cases in arrears have been outstanding for more than a year. He tells us that the number of cases in arrears has stayed at about 75% of all managed support cases since the last audit in 1994. He's telling us that you're doing no better a job than the NDP did. He's telling us that you have institutionalized NDP mediocrity when it comes to the handling of the Family Responsibility Office.

Minister, my question is very simple: Why is it that you have let 128,000 families down, representing over 200,000 children in Ontario?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): We recognize and take very seriously the issues raised in the auditor's report with respect to the Family Responsibility Office. We have built the most aggressive family support enforcement program in all of Canada, and we are constantly trying to improve it. It is a difficult endeavour and, as I say, we take seriously the comments made by the Provincial Auditor in the period with which he dealt, which took us to 1998, I believe.

Dealing with 1999, I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that improvements have been made, and that I am told as of this time 25% of the orders are in full compliance and 34% of the cases have payments made each month.

It is necessary to make improvements, I acknowledge that to the member opposite, but I also point out that this is the most ambitious program of its type in Canada.

Mr McGuinty: Let's understand that when this minister wants to move, he can move exceptionally quickly. When it came to the 200 or so squeegee kids who frequent the streets of downtown Toronto, he's got a bill that's been tabled here, he's ready to move, and he will spare no expense and no energy whatsoever to make things happen. But when it comes to 200,000 Ontario children who have been let down by their fathers, we now discover that this minister is, in his turn, letting them down as well.

What we're asking you to do is to accept responsibility for this crisis, to step up to the plate and to start going to bat for these kids. You're great at being aggressive with panhandlers and squeegee kids. When are you going to start stepping up to the plate and going to bat for these kids and dealing with their deadbeat fathers?

Hon Mr Flaherty: There's no question that the Family Responsibility Office can do better. This is a serious issue. It's not one with respect to which I would make political commentary. This is an office that deals with the recovery of money for spouses and for children in need.

I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition must have read the report. He would have noted that the auditor's report acknowledges the satisfactory management of the program's trust fund, which disbursed last year a record \$500 million. That's in the last fiscal year.

The report also acknowledges, as I'm sure the leader noted, the improvements that have been made since the previous audits. No other program in Canada serving spouses and children distributes that level of money to those persons who are in need of those funds.

Mr McGuinty: The facts here are undeniable: You are \$1.2 billion in arrears; 75% of the cases are in arrears; 128,000 families are affected, involving more than 200,000 Ontario children. Those are the undeniable facts. On top of that, the auditor says you are not being nearly aggressive enough in pursuing deadbeat fathers.

He also tells us, to add insult to injury, that he did some testing and he found that 43% of their calls didn't go through even after three successive attempts, due to busy signals. You simply don't have the capacity to deal with mothers who are phoning from across this province, who are their wits' end, who are pulling out their hair and trying to figure out how they're going to come up with enough money to buy their kids some Christmas presents.

How come you've got all kinds of energy and all kinds of drive when it comes to dealing with squeeze kids, but when it comes to 200,000 Ontario kids who have been let down by their dads you just can't do anything for them?

Hon Mr Flaherty: Improvements have been made. The auditor's report deals with a period to 1998.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Flaherty: As the honourable members will want to know, as of September 1999 FRO sent out over 10,000 driver's licence suspensions. In addition to the driver's licence suspensions, \$22 million have been collected from families as a result of that initiative alone. Then we moved forward with the collection agency's pilot project last year, following the auditor's analysis of the FRO, which indeed has collected over \$8 million of found money for spouses and children in Ontario. Improvements are being made; there's more to be done.

1430

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. The auditor today tells us something that we have been telling you all along: Only 32% of Ontario's cancer patients are receiving treatment in the recommended four-week waiting period. In some centres across the province it's as low as 24% of Ontario cancer patients. It seems to me that the people of the province work hard, pay their taxes and play by all the rules, and they are entitled to expect that at the end of the day, if their mother or their father is stricken with cancer, or anybody in the family or any of their loved ones become ill because of cancer, they will be entitled to the best possible treatment, including treatment in a timely way. Minister, why is it that only one third of Ontario's cancer patients get treatment in a timely way in Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the Leader of the Opposition probably does know, since he has obviously read the

report, the work of the Provincial Auditor in looking at Cancer Care Ontario was conducted between February and September 1998. As he may also know, it was in November 1998 that Cancer Care Ontario first brought to this government the issue of waiting lists. Now, this is a problem that you probably also remember has occurred three times in the last 10 years. However, our government is determined that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Would the minister take her seat. Order, member for St Catharines.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The Leader of the Opposition also knows that this is a problem that has occurred three times in the last 10 years. In fact, it occurred when his government was in office. I want to assure the Leader of the Opposition that our government is determined that these waiting times and waiting lists not happen again, so since November 1998 we have undertaken a nine-point plan to ensure that we can eliminate the waiting time problem.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I cannot hear the answer by the minister. I would ask the members for Windsor-St Clair and Windsor West to please come to order.

Hon Mrs Witmer: One of the first initiatives that our government did in responding to the need for the waiting list was to set up a task force. That task force reported to the Ministry of Health, and we have expanded the number of human resources. As you know, we expanded—

The Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mr McGuinty: Your government has been responsible for health care in Ontario for closing in on five years now. I'm not sure which is more disgraceful: your handling of this matter to date or the lofty goal that you have set for us. You tell us that right now, although we're only able to treat one third of Ontario patients in a timely way, the goal you've established for your government by March 31, 2000, is to provide timely treatment—that's treatment within four weeks of diagnosis for cancer patients—to 50% of our cancer patients. Fully one half of Ontario cancer patients, once we've achieved the goal that you have set out, will still not be getting treatment in a timely way as recommended by our doctors.

Minister, you tell me, what does that tell us about your health care standards in Ontario? One third is acceptable today, and tomorrow the goal that you have established for yourself and for our province is one half. Stand up and justify that.

Hon Mrs Witmer: What that says about the government in this province is that this government is leading the way. We are the only province in all of Canada to implement this high standard of a wait time of no more than four weeks as recommended by the Canadian Association of Radiation Oncologists—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. Order, member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I say, we are the only province to adopt this high standard, and I am very pleased to say that based on the initiatives that have been undertaken

throughout 1999, our nine-point plan, our plan is on track. We are recruiting and we are retaining the radiation therapists. We are recruiting and retaining the oncologists and the physicists. In fact, we are working very collaboratively with our partners. We have expanded and we have announced the addition of additional cancer centres in this province. We are going to see the opening of centres in Kitchener-Waterloo and in Mississauga and in Durham. We are expanding into St Catharines and into Sault Ste Marie. And now we're—

The Speaker: Order; the minister's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: The only thing that counts here today is that this minister accepts that the lofty goal she has established for all Ontarians, for all of our mothers and our fathers and our brothers and our sisters and our loved ones who are stricken with cancer, who our physicians tell us ought to be treated by radiation within four weeks of the time of diagnosis—this minister tells us that as far as she is concerned 50% is a good enough result. Well, I can tell you from our perspective that it's not nearly good enough. The only result we should be striving for in this province is 100%.

Minister, will you now, here and now, stand up and acknowledge that you have failed and continue to fail Ontario cancer patients and their families?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The Leader of the Opposition seems to forget that this has been an ongoing problem that unfortunately was not tackled by his government or the prior government. It is now being tackled today.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. This is the last warning to the member for Windsor West. I cannot hear if she continues to shout across when the answer is coming. This will be her last warning.

Hon Mrs Witmer: It is our government that has now indicated we don't want to see this problem again. We have taken nine steps and they're working. In fact, I would like to quote Dr Tom McGowan, who on February 26, 1999, said: "We've actually seen in the last few months that the waiting times have started to come down. We are working very hard and the waiting list has actually dropped." And, referring to the announcement that our government made, it "is going to allow us to bring it even closer." In fact, recently he said, "Provided that we continue doing as well as we are at present, we will have broken the back of the radiation waiting problem by the spring of 2000."

So the plan to bring in more human resources—

The Speaker: The minister's time.

1440

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is also for the Minister of Health. The Provincial Auditor's report today is a devastating account of your government's record in health care. First, the auditor's report shows that hospital restructuring is going to cost \$2 billion more than you admit and is years behind

schedule. Then the auditor's report says that your funding of hospitals bears absolutely no relationship to the needs of Ontario citizens for health care. Meanwhile, emergency rooms are piling up and people are sent home quicker and sicker than ever.

Minister, how can your government screw up the Ontario health care system so badly in just four and a half years?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the leader of the third party knows full well, this province was the very last province in Canada to tackle the reform of our health care system.

I'm very pleased to say that as a result of the work that has been done, we have managed to ensure that services are being brought closer to home. We are constructing new cardiac centres in the province again in Mississauga, in Kitchener and in York county. We are expanding the number of cancer centres by five. We have added at least 25 dialysis centres in this province to bring services closer to home. We have a diabetes strategy that continues to expand, to meet the needs of Aboriginals, northern communities and children. We have a new Alzheimer strategy of \$68 million to meet the needs of those with Alzheimer's and their caregivers. We have a heart health program, and the list goes on and on.

We have taken steps—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Time. Minister of Health take your seat please.

Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I want to congratulate you on being able to stand here today and reannounce stuff that you announced three and four years ago and much of it hasn't been delivered.

This is what the Provincial Auditor points to: With respect to your so-called health care restructuring he says that there is an example of a hospital, a new hospital, where \$110 million was made available for the construction of the hospital. That should be good news, but following the construction of the hospital, you refused to provide enough operating funds so that the facilities in the hospital can be used. What's the result? Four of the eight operating rooms are idle and people have to travel to other communities to get treatment.

Then the auditor says that restructuring cost overruns in hospital restructuring are likely to negate a significant portion of the so-called potential savings expected from hospital restructuring.

Minister, the Provincial Auditor—

The Speaker: Order. Member's time.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Maybe we want to focus first on the estimates that have been made by the Provincial Auditor where he talks about restructuring costs exceeding what has been predicted. Unfortunately, the auditor has looked at an exceeding of the estimates by 90%. Hospitals have actually indicated to us that they may exceed the estimates by 35% to 90%. He has taken the very worst scenario—so our estimates continue to be right on target. In fact, they have been confirmed by the Ontario Hospital Association, but as I say, the auditor has

taken the absolute worst scenario of looking at all of them as being in excess of 90% over what has been estimated.

Mr Hampton: There's a reason why the auditor is taking the worst scenario. He's been watching your government. He's watched you on the Family Responsibility Office, he's watched you with persons with disabilities, he's watched you in terms of cancer care, he's watched you in terms of the shortage of nurses, the shortage of physicians, and he knows, because of your track record, to expect the worst.

It goes on. The fact of the matter is that what you're doing to the health care system is going to give us a health care system that costs more. Turning over much of the delivery in the health care system to private American corporations is going to cost more. The hospital restructuring system is not going to save money; it's going to cost more. Sending patients to the United States to get cancer treatment is going to cost more and give us less cancer treatment.

Minister, I ask you the question. The auditor points out your sorry record. What are you going to do to fix the mess you've created in Ontario's health care system?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I would again emphasize, unfortunately health system strengthening and improvement was not undertaken by their government; we, unfortunately, came into this job. We did undertake the job. We recognized that based on the fact that we had a growing population, we had an older population and needs were changing, new drug therapy was changing the delivery of services, new medical technology, that we had to continue in the same way as the other governments throughout Canada. So we undertook to strengthen and improve our health system, and we have done so. We have made tremendous progress in bringing the services closer to home. We have made tremendous progress in making sure that we respond to the needs of individuals at all stages of their lives. Despite the fact that no one had—

The Speaker: New question.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Attorney General. There have now been three separate independent reviews of your Family Responsibility Office and each, including the one released today, confirms that your government is failing to deliver court-ordered support payments to families in the province.

With respect to enforcement, the audit today shows that at the end of November 1998, 75% of cases registered with the FRO were in arrears. It showed that most enforcement action only took place when a recipient or their advocate called and demanded action. It showed that when action is finally taken, there are gaps of more than six months between enforcement activities on the same file. It also showed that aggressive enforcement—like the suspension of drivers' licences, like default hearings, like garnishment of bank accounts—are rarely used

by your staff. As a result, the amount of arrears under your government has almost doubled to \$1.2 billion.

Minister, it's clear the enforcement activities at the FRO are not working. What are you going to do to guarantee that families who are owed and need support payments finally get them?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): There's no doubt that there are serious issues raised in the report by the auditor covering the period that the auditor covered, into 1998.

For the member opposite, though, to say that the Family Responsibility Office is failing to deliver the funds the people need, that is just not so. The current statistic, as I've given it, is that about 59% of payments are either on time or some payments are being made on a monthly basis. So it's not accurate to say that there's a 75% arrears situation, as we speak today, in 1999.

Improvements need to be made. Some improvements have been made. Certainly there are more to be made.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A 59% success rate isn't that impressive when it means that 41% of the files at the FRO continue to suffer from this government's negligence in getting the office up and running. It's been over three years since we brought back videotape showing you your FRO in packing crates. The phone calls still aren't getting answered and, on the rare occasion when they are answered, your over \$2 billion blown in 1998 on front-end interface is either fully or partially inoperable.

You now have increased staff levels to more than what they were when the eight family responsibility offices were functioning as regional offices across the province. There have been no savings for any taxpayer, you won't track down deadbeat dads and you punish paying fathers by losing the cheques or the monies they send in. When are you going to fix it?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I point out that since 1998 there have been three initiatives that are quite important in terms of effecting further recovery of arrears for the spouses and children that need them: first of all, the reporting of arrears to credit bureaus; second, the suspension of drivers' permits; and third, the retention of collection agencies in the private sector first of all to go after arrears more than three years old—and that's been successful to the tune of \$8 million—and now more recently, this year, to go after debt that is six months old and more. These initiatives are being taken.

More needs to be done. We have to be vigilant in terms of trying to collect the arrears that accrue from time to time. But we are taking these steps in the interests of the spouses and children in Ontario who are entitled to the payments.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. One of your government's first actions was to cut hospital budgets by

\$800 million. Now half the province's hospitals are running deficits, and your response has been to tell them to cut even more services in order to get their budgets balanced.

The auditor's report today tells us that just isn't good enough. The auditor tells us that your funding formula for hospitals is completely out of whack. I quote the auditor's report: "It does not take into account the demand for hospital services." What that means in people terms, Minister, is what we've all seen: ambulances coming to hospitals and being told that their patients can't go into that emergency room, they've got to go somewhere else; as many as 30 people lying for days on stretchers in emergency room hallways; people who do get a hospital bed waiting months to get surgery.

Minister, do you now understand what the hospitals of this province have been trying to tell you: that you have created absolute chaos in hospital care?

1450

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member I think is aware of the fact that we recognize, and we have publicly been on the record as stating, that a new hospital funding formula is necessary. In fact, we have been working very aggressively this past year on developing a new funding formula. We've been working with the Ontario Hospital Association through a committee called the joint policy and planning committee.

As the member also probably knows, this new funding formula is a complex issue. We are the only province, again, in Canada that is creating a new comprehensive funding formula for our hospitals which will address the growing and the aging population. It will be based on a formula that takes into consideration age, gender, sex, growth, aboriginal status, mortality rates and fertility rates. That will be ready by the end of the year, and we plan to begin to implement—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Health, take your seat. Supplementary.

Mrs McLeod: Let's try to deal with the facts as we know them today. Your answer to hospital funding problems was to cut \$800 million from their budgets. Your plan for this year, in response to half the hospitals in this province having deficits, is to cut another \$100 million from hospital budgets. Your answer to the hospital funding problem was to let your hospital restructuring commission go out and find so-called savings by shutting down hospitals.

The auditor's report tells us that the whole restructuring plan is a mess, just like your funding formula. You need to spend \$1.8 billion more on capital than your restructuring commission said you should. You know that, Minister, because your ministry is busy trying to fix the problems the commission created for you. The auditor says that many hospitals have been unable to realize the savings that the commission had intended them to make, another mistake you're going to have to fix.

I ask you, will you now begin to fix the real problems by stopping the cuts you plan to hospital budgets, go

back to the drawing board and make sure our hospitals have enough funds that they can provide emergency care and beds when the people of this province need hospital beds?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just remind the member opposite that hospital budgets this past year have increased from \$6.8 billion to \$7.2 billion. I've also just indicated to her that we are doing exactly what has been recommended: We are developing a new funding formula. It will be ready by the end of this year. We will begin to use it next year.

I would just tell you where the additional \$400 million in hospital budgets is going this year: \$130 million for nursing; \$9.1 million for neonatal care; \$27.9 million for new mothers; \$86 million in base funding increases; and \$20 million for high-growth areas. I would also add that there has been one-time funding of \$279 million for Y2K compliance issues; \$100 million for restructuring pressures; \$87 million—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Barrie Raceway is an important attraction for my constituents, and the horse racing industry is a vital contributor to the local economy in my riding.

Across the province, horse racing provides 25,000 full-time jobs and contributes \$2 billion to Ontario's economy each year. Important as this industry is to several communities across the province, horse racing has experienced declining attendance in the past and faces competition from other gaming alternatives in the future.

Minister, what steps is this government taking to revitalize horse racing in Ontario and give racetracks the tools they need to compete?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I'd like to thank the member for the question. As the member indicated, horse racing is an important part of local economies in communities like his—Barrie, Sarnia, Sudbury and Windsor—and the government has taken action to help the industry grow.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Runciman: First of all, our government did what it does best, which the Liberal member for St Catharines dislikes intensely, and that's reduce taxes. We dropped the parimutuel tax from 7.4% to 0.5% in our last mandate. This means that \$54 million in revenue is returned to the industry each year.

Secondly, our government, through the good offices of my friend Mr Hodgson, announced that racetracks, with municipal approval, could install gaming machines, and that has resulted in a significant turnaround. Fort Erie, for example, was doomed to closure; it has now had 25 more racing days—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Minister's time. Supplementary.

Mr Tascona: Thank you, Minister, for acknowledging how much the horse racing industry contributes to local economies in Ontario.

Combining horse racing and gaming machines at racetracks is having a positive impact on local job creation, but there are concerns expressed that charity gaming revenue from activities like bingo may not be able to compete with an alternative gaming environment.

What effect would these changes at racetracks have on local charity gaming?

Hon Mr Runciman: There's no doubt that in the broad sense this has certainly helped the Ontario economy—1,000 new jobs—as well as helping the horse racing industry.

Jane Holmes of the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association told the Windsor Star that these improvements have been "very, very positive." The racetracks have not benefited at the expense of local charities.

What I can tell the member is that the experience with opening the Windsor Casino has indicated that any slowdown at charity bingo halls is very short lived. Charity bingo activity in Windsor returned to about the same pre-casino level within the first year of operation of the Windsor Casino.

I can also tell the member about the experience in Sarnia, where the local lottery licence officer told the Sarnia Observer that she has not seen "a significant drop in revenues."

The government is monitoring very closely any impact expanded gaming may have on local charities and we're working with—

The Speaker: Order. Minister's time.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Today's auditor's report provided damning evidence that your government is compromising public safety on our provincial highways.

In the area of road maintenance, Ontario Liberals have always feared that your drive to privatize would compromise public safety. Your response has always been you would only privatize if cost savings were achieved and safety maintained. Yet the auditor's report states (1) that your government did not achieve the 5% savings you said were your minimum to privatize, (2) that your government sold off ministry vehicles and equipment to the private sector without public auction or tender and (3) that your government has risked public safety on our highways by creating patrol areas too large for our ministry staff to monitor in order to ensure that our highways are safe.

We have phantom savings, ministry equipment sold off at fire-sale prices, compromised safety standards on our highways. Minister, what do you intend to do to correct this unacceptable situation?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question. Our government is committed to finding efficiencies and indeed we have found efficiencies. The area maintenance contracts have given us savings of 5% or more.

While we certainly appreciate the good work that the Provincial Auditor does in bringing things to our attention, I would point out that in fact the auditor has not taken into account the costs of capital equipment or maintenance which is required by the government if the government is conducting such activities. Therefore, to compare apples with apples, you have to consider the costs that the government incurred in capital equipment and maintenance.

Mr Gravelle: Minister, you need to get out of Pleasantville. I'm telling you, these are very serious matters of public safety raised by the auditor and your response is simply not good enough.

Why are you so hell-bent in your determination to privatize area maintenance work across the province without any guarantees of public safety or cost savings? It's very simple. The auditor's report is very clear: Your privatization may be costing taxpayers more and standards of maintenance have declined. The ministry is paying \$1 million per year to maintain roads that are not even being done by ministry staff any more. They've been downloaded to municipalities. You're paying a million bucks for that.

1500

Minister, my question to you is very simple: Will you put a moratorium on any further privatization of maintenance work in this province, or will you continue to risk lives by this reckless abandonment of your responsibilities?

Hon Mr Turnbull: I would point out that the MTO's accounting practices are supported by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the member take his seat. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, member for Kingston and the Islands, member for Sudbury. Minister of Transportation.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I would fully understand the Liberals having such jollity. The fact is, you don't understand saving money. All you understand is spending taxpayers' money.

Our government is committed to finding efficiencies in government, and indeed we are finding them: 5% on area maintenance contracts.

CHILD WELFARE

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): My question is for the minister responsible for children. There seems to be an increased interest and concern by members of my constituency about the need to better provide protection for children. I am also aware that the children's aid societies face many challenges in providing children with

the protection and support they need. As minister responsible for children, would you please tell us what is being done to strengthen our child welfare system?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I thank the member for Thornhill for this really important question. Earlier, at the beginning of this afternoon's session, we recognized what needs to be done for children, and certainly the abuse or neglect of any child is disturbing for everyone in this government; indeed, everyone in this chamber. That is why we've committed ourselves to improving the child welfare system in Ontario. In fact, several coroners' inquests that took place over the last number of years highlighted the need to reform the child protection system. Our government has worked very closely with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, as well as individual CASs, in developing and implementing these reforms.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Answer.

Hon Mrs Marland: We have made significant improvements to key areas, including funding for the training of more front-line workers. We've introduced a risk assessment model and—

The Speaker: Order. Minister, time. Supplementary.

Mrs Molinari: Minister, last year the provincial government passed amendments to the Child and Family Services Act. Can you please tell us how this new act will provide greater protection for our children?

Hon Mrs Marland: Our motivation for beginning child welfare reforms, first and foremost, was to protect vulnerable children from abuse and neglect. The amendments we made to the Child and Family Services Act last May represent the first major changes to child protection legislation in 10 years. We strengthened our ability to protect children, and we are clearly putting the child's best interests first. Those amendments provide stronger tools for the courts, professionals and front-line workers to do their jobs. They also improve access of children's aid societies to information they need to protect children at risk.

We need to ensure that stakeholders like the children's aid society are ready to implement these changes. Given the new threshold of risk, and this is the most important point that—

The Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): The question is for the Minister of Transportation. Three years ago, the Minister of Transportation told the people of Ontario that by turning highway maintenance over to private corporations, you were going to save money.

Today the auditor tells us that in three of the four highway districts that have been turned over to private companies, it is costing more. Then he says, "Outsourcing may ultimately result in a significant increase in the cost of highway maintenance in these contracts."

Minister, can you tell us why you're sticking the people of Ontario with a private highway maintenance

system that is going to cost them more money and deliver them less service?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to respond to the leader of the third party by pointing out that we are getting better value for the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Provincial Auditor ignores the cost of capital equipment or maintenance, and these have to be considered. If you do not consider them, you're not comparing apples with apples. We are committed to continuing on with an excellent program of outsourcing which is saving the taxpayers of Ontario money, which we, sir, are investing in the highways of this province at a record rate beyond that which either of the two previous governments ever invested in the highways.

Mr Hampton: We see again that according to this government, the auditor doesn't know what he's talking about. The team of accountants in the auditor's office don't know what they're talking about.

Minister, this is what the auditor found: When you turned those contracts over to your private corporate friends, you double-counted and tried to inflate what your own ministry employees would cost you if they did the work. Second, they also found that you tried to cook the books by selling off the equipment and then somehow counting that equipment as revenue that would go on in the future.

When you factor those two things out, your privatization scheme is going to cost the people of Ontario a lot more money, is going to deliver a lot less service, and is putting the quality of highways and the quality of public safety at risk.

Minister, will you shut down your privatization system so that the people of Ontario don't have to pay more for highway maintenance and don't have to risk public safety because that maintenance isn't being—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Transportation.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I'd like to first of all comment on safety. Safety is our top priority. We will continue to emphasize it. Our roads today in this province are the fourth-safest in North America. That's an improvement from either the time that you were the government or the Liberals were the government. The fatality and accident rate is down at 1950s levels. We are committed to continuing the safety blitz that will continue to improve our roads, and we are spending on roads.

With respect to the auditor's report, I have pointed out that he is not counting the cost of capital equipment or maintenance equipment. You cannot make a comparison unless you include those in the cost.

HEALTH SERVICES IN NIAGARA

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is for the Minister of Health. Thousands of patients in the Niagara region are going to be forced to travel down the very busy Queen Elizabeth highway in order to receive the services of an ophthalmologist.

You would recognize, Minister, that per capita, the Niagara region has the oldest population in the province. We have only 13 ophthalmologists, not all of them are full-time, and we have a present waiting time of four to six months for individuals who wish to have an appointment with an ophthalmologist.

Your solution is to lump them in with Hamilton and say, "See, there's no shortage." It won't work because Hamilton is already backed up with patients and with time for operating.

Minister, will you now do the right thing for the people of the Niagara region, for patients, particularly elderly patients in the Niagara region? Will you now remove the cap on ophthalmologist billings in the Niagara region so that patients in Niagara can receive the kind of eye care they need and they deserve?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member is talking about the specialist retention initiative, and as I think the member knows, each year the criteria for that program are established through the Physician Services Committee, which means that it is staff at the Ministry of Health and it is physicians themselves who determine the criteria. Each year they review them and they approve them, and based on the criteria that have been approved this year, it was determined that physicians would be exempt only if they are in a unique specialty or in a geographic underserved area where there could be a service access problem. So that was a decision that was made by the Physician Services Committee.

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Mr Bradley: Clearly the purse strings are in your government's hands, not in those doctors' hands. Let me share with you what the St Catharines Standard editorial has to say:

"Ontario's health ministry has to take a more honest approach to dealing with the shortage of eye doctors in Niagara. To simply lump this region in with Hamilton-Wentworth and say the two regions are not underserved is an absurd shell game....

"It doesn't matter to them that patients, many of them seniors, face either longer delays for treatment here or the prospect of driving down the QEW to Hamilton in order to see a doctor....

"The health ministry has to stop pulling the wool over our eyes. Trying to solve this problem by cavalierly erasing a boundary line doesn't take into account the hardships the people involved will face. The only way we're going to see some quick relief is for the ministry to lift the patient care cap and declare Niagara an underserved region."

You can talk about all the committees you want; the purse strings are in your hands. Will you quit your obsession with tax cuts and reinvest in the health care of this province so that our people in Niagara can receive appropriate eye care?

Hon Mrs Witmer: First of all, I think it's absolutely essential that I stress the fact that our government has increased funding for health care to the highest level ever

in the history of this province. We are currently spending about \$20.6 billion. That is a tremendous increase and we've indicated we will spend 20% more in the next few years, so for anyone to pretend that we are spending less, it is not so, and it is based on the fact that we have created and helped to create an economy where we do have taxes and they are being paid and it is for that reason that we can support the health system that we have today.

Again, I remind you that we work co-operatively with our partners. In this case it is physicians who work with the Ministry of Health who have designed the criteria for this program, and each year those—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

New question.

HIGHWAY 17

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Many of the residents of eastern Ontario, particularly the western part of the Ottawa-Carleton region and up the valley towards Renfrew, are concerned about the safety of Highway 17. This government, to give credit where credit is due, has made a great deal of progress in the area by expanding four-lane highways, particularly to Antrim.

Last May, the previous Minister of Transportation committed to continue this expansion from Antrim to Arnprior of the four-lane highway, and to initiate the process that would lead to the highway's future expansion through to Renfrew. Will the government honour this important commitment?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for his question and I'm delighted to reconfirm our government's commitment to four-lane Highway 17 through to Arnprior. I would like to comment on the excellent work of our former colleague Leo Jordan in making sure that this money was available for it.

As well, I would like to report that preliminary design studies will begin very shortly from Arnprior to Renfrew. This government honours its commitments. A nine-kilometre section was completed last month on 417 and designs for the four-laning of the next section, from Regional Road 20 to Regional Road 22, is currently underway.

Mr Coburn: I'm sure the residents of that area will find those words very encouraging.

Clearly, this government has proven its commitment to eastern Ontarians by enhancing our transportation infrastructure, particularly with the completion of Highway 416, enhancements to Highway 7 and the continued four-laning of Highway 17. The federal Liberals, on the other hand, seem to be missing in action.

Minister, will you now call on the federal Liberals to join the province in making a commitment to this important part of our safety and economic well-being and encourage them to invest in our transportation infrastructure for future prosperity?

Hon Mr Turnbull: You ask a tremendously important question. We're spending record amounts this year, at close to \$700 million. This year alone the federal government will take out of Ontario in excess of \$2 billion in gasoline taxes. Last year they invested \$20 million, after taking \$2 billion out of the province.

The provincial premiers reaffirmed, and just last night the provincial ministers of finance reaffirmed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will the minister take his seat. I cannot, with the two sides going back and forth, hear.

Is the minister done?

Hon Mr Turnbull: Perhaps I should repeat: The federal Liberals took in \$2 billion and spent \$20 million on the roads of this province.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. This is a memorandum dated November 5 regarding the Ontario Real Estate Corp real estate sales program. I've read it with great interest. Seeing your press release, you've outlined eight approximate items regarding the process of sales. I think you've missed one, and I want to bring it to your attention right now.

I want to remind you of an announcement that was made on March 23 of this year by your colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services with great fanfare when she said the province would be making lands available for affordable housing projects. I'm going to quote that release to you. It said the Harris government would be "making vacant or underused public lands available to create at minimum 500 units of affordable rental housing." It goes on: "More affordable housing is needed and the private sector is in the best position to build it. However, the cost of land can be a barrier. These lands will be provided at reduced prices...."

Minister, confirm the process for me. Tell me what specific arrangements you've made for the affordable housing projects, and finally, for the record, please tell this House which lands have been set aside—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member's time.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The member of the opposition knows the announcement was made by a different minister, but I will endeavour to explain the policy. On the specifics, he can ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing exactly which properties.

The Ontario Real Estate Corp is reviewing a whole number of properties that the government no longer needs. We don't wish to tie up our dollars maintaining or upgrading those pieces of property that are not needed by the taxpayers to deliver services that the public expect. In that regard, there is a whole list of properties that will be reviewed to create a business case to see if we should sell them or not, and those dollars can be utilized by the

government of Ontario to provide services that the public care about.

In terms of the homeless strategy, we have been quite clear and upfront on that: There are a few pieces of property that, with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we'll consider for sites to help the homeless.

1520

Mr Caplan: Interesting. We should all be concerned about the answer the minister has given us today, because in March your colleague gets up and makes a splashy pre-election announcement saying you're going to do something about homelessness in the province. Then of course your government goes ahead and guts rent controls and tenant protection; you've slashed shelter allowances.

Here it is, eight months later, and you're selling off assets without any consideration to the promises you made eight months ago. The time for action is now. I've met with many groups from around this province who are anxious to access public lands for affordable housing, and these groups want to hear what your plans are today.

Minister, why don't you just admit that you're never planning to give up any lands for public housing, that there is no proposal you're interested in? Why don't you tell this House that it's another in a list of broken promises? Admit today that when you come to write press releases, you know how to talk the talk, but when it comes to living up to the meagre commitments you made in March, you have no idea how to walk the walk. Admit that the announcement in March was a sham. Admit that you have—

The Speaker: Order. The member's time is up.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The answer to his preamble is no.

In answer to his announcement on the homeless strategy, it was announced that it's in co-operation with other levels of government. I know the federal Liberal Party has been accused of dragging its feet on this, but I've heard rumours that they're getting involved. The municipality of Toronto is quite concerned. It is a municipal responsibility and other levels of government have been working with this. The announcement in the spring was, "If we can be helpful, we will." We've announced how much effort we've put into this. There has been the Ministry of Health as well as the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and they certainly don't need to take a back seat to any of those false accusations that you've been suggesting.

FORT HENRY

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. There is a concern in eastern Ontario regarding the future of Fort Henry, which is located in Kingston. It is my understanding that Fort Henry is owned by the federal government through Parks Canada but has been operated under lease by the province through the St Lawrence Parks Commission. This fort is designated as a national historic site by the federal government and is an important part of our national

heritage. Can the minister tell me what steps are being taken to preserve Fort Henry?

Interjection.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I noticed the interjections from the member for Kingston and the Islands, who hasn't found time to ask a question about a fort in his own riding.

The fact is that this fort is operated by the provincial government, yet it is the only example in Canada of a national heritage property owned by the federal government but subsidized by the taxpayers of a province to the tune of \$1.2 million. This government is committed to ensuring that it has an outstanding program at this site, but we're not getting the commitment in order to ensure the preservation of this historical site. As I say, we're providing about a \$1.2-million subsidy to operate the program at Fort Henry every year.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Why doesn't the minister just put back the money he took out of the system and out of the St Lawrence—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the member take his seat. Supplementary?

Mr Coburn: I have expressed concern about the structural integrity of the fort and the St Lawrence Parks Commission have expressed concern about the lack of capital investment in Fort Henry. Can the minister bring us up to date on the discussions with the three levels of government?

Hon Mr Jackson: The people of eastern Ontario should be concerned about this important historical site. After all, for the last two years our government has been sitting at a table, sitting down with residents of the Kingston area, with their municipal council, and with the federal government. We have to realize that this property used to be a Department of National Defence property and it was only recently that the federal government determined it wasn't essential to the security of our nation. It has now been transferred over to Parks Canada, but they're not putting any money into it in terms of a long-term commitment to ensure its preservation.

Our responsibility is to the taxpayers of Ontario. We are maintaining our commitment to our historical sites that we've developed in this province. We are very proud of the fact that we're putting \$2.5 million into Ste-Marie-among-the-Hurons and Discovery Harbour, \$3.2 million into Old Fort William in Thunder Bay, and over \$4 million has gone into the St Lawrence Parks Commission, which includes Upper Canada Village. These are important heritage properties that this government has continued to commit taxpayers' dollars to preserve.

VISITORS

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think it's appropriate for me at this point in time to point out to you that we have

visitors in the east gallery from the centre of the universe, the Swan Lake retirement community in Markham.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It's not a point of order.

COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Yesterday, the members of the standing committee on justice had its organizational meeting. At that time they elected a Chair and a Vice-Chair, and as well at that time the members of the subcommittee were determined. The subcommittee adjourned its meeting until today, at 3:30 of course.

My office received a telephone call from the clerk's office indicating that today's meeting is cancelled, and the proposal was that the meeting be held on Thursday at 3:30, in the alternative. The explanation that was given was that Mr Mazzilli, who is the member for London-Fanshawe, was going to be substituting for Ms Elliott, who was the person named to the committee and who was the person on the subcommittee.

I spoke with Mr Mazzilli and I take everything he told me, quite frankly, at face value. I have confidence in what he's explained to me, that he is a member of the committee that's meeting today to deal with the municipal affairs estimates.

My question to you, Speaker, and the point of order is that I find it an interesting twist of the rules to adjourn a meeting to a certain time, date and place, and then, without having that meeting occur, to just simply say, "Well, the meeting's not going to happen there and let's try Thursday at 3:30."

Mr Mazzilli explains that he's the parliamentary assistant, of course, and would be interested in this matter. I appreciate that and I understand that. But today was only a subcommittee meeting. I will make myself available Thursday, of course I will, and quite frankly I'm prepared to consent to having this meeting transferred or adjourned from today to Thursday.

But I raise this, Speaker, first of all to make a record of what happened, because you understand I'm a little suspicious about these sorts of things. But fair enough, and I attribute nothing other than the best of motives to Mr Mazzilli. I want to make that very clear. But I say to the Speaker that the Speaker in this instance should indicate on this point of order that a committee hearing can't just be adjourned out of thin air, that you can't just over the telephone say, "Oh, well, we're not going to be there on Tuesday, so let's do it Thursday."

In any event, though, I'm going to consent to the matter occurring, because I understand why Mr Mazzilli should be at that committee. But I'm concerned about this and I don't want the record to indicate that I'm accepting it as any sort of precedent—far from it. It's only by unanimous consent, in my view, that the committee or subcommittee can do this.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member will know it's not a point of order. With respect, he may want

to raise it with the committee Chair in dealing with committee matters. I'm sure the members will be able to work it out.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would appreciate some clarification as to why it's not a point of order. I don't want to belabour it. I was the other member attending the committee meeting yesterday. There was an agreement of all three parties to have the meeting on a date. But if there is an abandonment of that consensus, if involvement of all members on the committee is altered, why is that not a point of order for the Speaker?

The Speaker: I ruled it was not a point of order. This is something that should be dealt with by the committee Chair in dealing with that. I'm sure that the members will be able to work it out. In situations like this it is not a point of order dealing with procedures in this House.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: It was a subcommittee of the committee that was to meet. It could very well be a point of order. It has to be taken up at the committee level and a ruling has to be made. What I'm trying to say, Mr Speaker, is that—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Fine.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Could you explain to me, was the last speaker a consultant to the Speaker in giving advice to this House?

The Speaker: I thank the member for his help on that.

Hon Mr Klees: On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe that your ruling is appropriate and it's up to the committee, as you say, to deal with this matter.

The Speaker: I'm sure the members will be able to work this out.

1530

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): Mr Speaker, I rise today on a brief point of privilege. Yesterday in the House, in response to a question from the honourable member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, the Hansard records me as saying, "In Ontario, we consider parole to be a right and not a privilege." That of course is not what I intended to say. That may well be—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sampson: I hear the members from the Liberal benches heckling. That of course would be their particular view of parole in this province; I certainly know it's a view of the federal Liberal government in this country. But this government and this minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Would the member take his seat. The member is trying to change the record and I cannot hear. I'd appreciate it if all the members would let the minister make the correction.

Minister.

Hon Mr Sampson: Thank you, Speaker. What was recorded in Hansard may well be the position from the Liberal benches, but this government, this minister, believes that in Ontario parole is a privilege and not a right, and it's a privilege to be earned. I want that record corrected. Thank you.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Help me, Speaker. Is he suggesting that the record from yesterday ought to be corrected, or is he simply correcting the error that he made yesterday? I'm being quite—

The Speaker: I think the member is, if I follow, directly trying to correct the record of what he said yesterday.

Hon Mr Sampson: Just to be clear, Speaker, I'm correcting the record, and it's my record, so I believe that's within the realm of the privilege. I was just pointing out that what is recorded in Hansard may well be the view of the Liberal Party, but it's not the view of this minister that parole—

The Speaker: Order. The minister has made the correction.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Surely to goodness the record of these proceedings is whatever the record says. A member can come in here the next day and say, "What is being recorded is not what I meant to say," but he cannot correct the record of what he actually said on the day when he said it. I'm quite serious about this, Speaker. Surely the record of this House is the record of this House.

The Speaker: You know the procedure is that he is allowed to change the next day, and what he is very clearly saying is that the record today will reflect the change that he is talking about. The member has, I think, tried to do that and make the point of privilege and change things, which all members are allowed to do in this House.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I just wanted you to know I keep receiving hundreds of petitions from residents who are against the closing of schools in Toronto. This one reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's decision to slash education funding could lead to the closure of many neighbourhood schools"—and indeed has led to the closure of schools—"including one of the most community-oriented schools like Earls Court public school; and

"Whereas the present funding formula does not take into account the historic and cultural links schools have with their communities nor the special education programs that have developed as a direct need of our communities; and

"Whereas the prospect of closing neighbourhood community schools will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools; and

"Whereas Earlscourt public school is a community school with many links to the immediate neighbourhood, such as day care, a games room, an open gym, fitness classes and a site for sports activities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, demand that the government changes the funding formula to take into account the historic, cultural and community links that Earlscourt public school has established."

I'm signing this document because I'm in total agreement with this.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm very privileged to present a petition on behalf of the honourable Janet Ecker, who is not able to present this petition on behalf of her constituents. Specifically, Donna Craig has presented here a very large number of petition signatures from such constituents as Irene Wilson, Janet Ellis, Sebastian Angelo, Barbara McLeod, just to name but five.

"We, the undersigned residents of Canada, draw the attention of the House to the following:

"That lately there has been a distinct increase in animal cruelty in Ontario;

"That the antiquated laws and punishments must be amended in order to deter animal abusers from inflicting pain and agony on defenceless animals that are only wanting unconditional love;

"That by having stricter laws would discourage an abuser of domineering a defenceless animal because of the cost and time spent in jail if convicted;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" to introduce laws which would provide longer jail sentences, larger fines, no further ownership of animals within a lifetime and publication of accused's names and addresses.

I'm pleased to present these on behalf of Janet Ecker.

LANDFILL

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I have a petition here for the Premier, signed by almost the entire community of Tyendinaga, and it reads:

"We, the residents of Tyendinaga township, strongly object to the development of a mega garbage dump in our area. Please stop the proposed expansion of the Richmond landfill site by Canadian Waste Systems."

I'm signing my name to this petition as I support the residents of Tyendinaga in their fight to stop this dump. There are over 700 names on this and I'm pleased to add my name to them.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I'd like to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenues in road safety improvements in Ontario."

This petition has been signed by many residents of Mississauga and I'm pleased to present it to you.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the

unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

Again, this is signed by another 100 concerned constituents in my riding and I have affixed my signature in full agreement with their concerns.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail establishments;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

I've also signed the petition.

1540

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor;"—and the carnage continues—"and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips."

This is signed by a number of residents of St Thomas and Elgin county area, and I gladly affix my signature.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes, and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes,

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

This is signed by a number of residents from Morpeth, Chatham and Thamesville. I add my signature to it.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposures to sexually explicit material;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail establishments;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

I've also signed the petition.

OPPOSITION DAY

SPORTS FACILITY TAXATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I seek unanimous consent to read the motion on behalf of our leader.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Christopherson: On behalf of Mr Hampton, I move that:

Be it resolved that, in the opinion of this House, professional sports operations should not benefit from special property tax reductions.

I'm pleased to provide the leadoff debate for my caucus on this issue. I would advise the Speaker that our

leader, Howard Hampton, will be doing our wrap-up debate just prior to the vote later this afternoon.

The issue we have here on the floor right now is one that, for the second time since this Parliament has sat, in a very short time, sees the official opposition and the government joining hand in hand, trotting down the same economic path. In this case, it's a question of whether or not there will be tax breaks, of course something this government claims to be a real expert at, and it is, in terms of making sure that the very well off get lots of tax breaks, and that's what we have again.

This is all about cracking under the pressure that's being put on the government, and obviously on the official opposition, the Liberals too, to provide further benefits to NHL millionaires. This is what upsets us. The minister talks about the fact that he wants to create a level playing field. Yet it disturbs us that at this time of massive cuts in order to pay for their tax cut neither the minister nor any of his colleagues ever talk about a level playing field for the homeless. Or how about a level playing field for workers or a level playing field for those individuals in our communities who are watching and experiencing our health care system deteriorate? How about a level playing field for the kids with special needs in Hamilton who aren't getting the supports they need in the classroom, through educational assistance, so that they can fully participate in the education system, as they have up until now and as they are entitled to under law, because there's not enough money?

The government changed the funding formula and now our board doesn't have enough money to hire the necessary education assistants to help these special-needs kids go into the classroom and learn. Where is the government standing up and saying there has to be a level playing field for our kids? We need to make sure that kids with special needs have the same opportunities for an education that every other child has. Why aren't they talking about that level playing field?

Again, in Hamilton we're talking about \$3.5 million. That's a lot of money; in the context of a budget of \$60 some-odd billion, which I believe is what the revenue number is now, it's not. But if it was your child, all the money in the world wouldn't seem big enough to justify why your child can't be participating in a classroom the way they have in the past and the way they're entitled to. No, this government doesn't want to have that level playing field debate. They want to have a debate about a level playing field that is going to see, ultimately, if the option is taken up, \$32 million—\$16 million from the province and \$16 million from the municipalities involved—and I'll speak to that in a moment.

With all the problems we've got in our communities, which, by the way, they've either created or exacerbated by virtue of their cuts, billions of dollars given back to the very wealthy, they've decided that \$32 million will not go to health care, won't go to help the homeless. God forbid they should do anything to provide an infrastructure to support those squeegee kids, because their answer to that, of course, is to throw them all in jail and treat

them like criminals. They don't think it's important enough to spend this money on social services. Where is the Ontarians with Disabilities Act they've promised? None of those things get any attention by this government, not in a meaningful way. But, boy, when it comes to tax breaks for hockey millionaires, they can't get an announcement out fast enough, they can't get that legislation through quick enough. Because \$32 million is nothing for them to worry about when it comes to providing tax breaks for millionaires. They're already probably the best at it in Canada.

But God help you if you're not one of those chosen few and you don't have the means to have private health care, private education, live in a gated community, the only roads that are left to what everyone used to have access to just a few years ago under Mike Harris's Ontario.

1550

None of those things is a priority. Is it just the NDP saying that? Well, it is in this House, that's for sure, because the Tories are proposing it and the Liberals are trotting right on side just like they are with the very extreme balanced budget legislation that's coming down.

The only ones who are saying—here anyway—that this is a wrong idea, wrong priority, and not the best use of \$32 million of taxpayers' money are the NDP. But outside? According to an Angus Reid poll that was released, conducted on behalf of the federal Department of Industry, only 37% of the population supports this. How did this become one of the biggest, most important fiscal matters facing this government? How the hell did that happen?

Again, we're not the only ones who have some real concerns. Walter Robinson of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation states something very interesting. He's on record as saying, "The money people in business spend on games is disposable income and they'll just spend that elsewhere."

I know the economic arguments are going to come up about why this should be done. If I lived in a locale affected by this, purely to represent my home community I might try and make those arguments too. Objectively, in fairness, an MPP has to do what they have to do for their community. If you don't do it, who else will? I have lots of time and respect for that. But that's a whole lot different from a caucus uniting around a position or, in this case, a government saying that the policy for them is that the best way to spend \$32 million is to give it to hockey millionaires. That's the problem with this.

Two last things before I sit down. One, I find it—I can't use the language that describes how I find it, but I will say that I find it curious that the government has involved the municipalities in this. They're going to argue partnerships or "We don't want to be telling municipalities what to do," which of course is a joke, because you've taken over just about everything. Whatever they say is really not the point. The fact of the matter is I think they're doing this because they want political cover. That way it's not just them.

If the government believes in it that much, spend the whole \$32 million. No, no, they split it 50/50 between them and the municipalities. I think it's to provide political cover. They just want to be able to say: "We're not the only government. It's not just us. Here's this local city council; they've decided it's their biggest priority."

It's interesting that it seems that Toronto—which is of course one of the key communities affected by this. It would appear at this point that their council has absolutely no appetite for this, for the simple reason that, unlike the Mike Harris cabinet ministers, the Toronto councillors, when they walk down the street, acknowledge and see and have some compassion for the fact that there are people sleeping on the street because they don't have anywhere to live. Again, if not directly caused, it's certainly exacerbated by the policies of this government—the vicious, mean-spirited policies of this government.

So it would appear Toronto council has looked at this issue and said, "How in God's name would we justify spending \$16 million on hockey millionaires, when we're trying to find every scrap of available dollars to put into some of the social services that we so desperately need in our community, given the fact that the Harris government has dumped all these issues on us and has set in place policies that are causing more and more people to be homeless?" Bear in mind, that's just an indicator. When we talk about the homeless, it's the most blatant example of what's happening in the economy to the vast majority of people in terms of starting to fall downward. It's only those at the very top, those who are already doing well, who are getting the real benefit of this government's agenda.

So it doesn't look like it's going to happen in Toronto but where it may happen in other communities, make no mistake, the minister of the day responsible is going to stand in his or her place and say: "It's not just us; it's also the local community. They decided it's a priority." Again, more political smoke and mirrors.

The other thing I expect, since we're the only ones opposing this and we've put this issue forward, is that we're going to face some criticisms and some attention today, and that's fine. We welcome that, because I'm sure somebody is going to want to talk about some of the programs and supports that we put in place in some communities, such as your own in Sault Ste Marie, Speaker.

We will be reminding all the Tories and Liberals who want to talk about that today that the period we were in, from 1990 to 1995, represented the most serious economic recession across North America and indeed most of the world, but most severe in North America—and, by the way, ultimately most severe in Canada thanks to the policies of that wonderful Tory, Brian Mulroney—so we did help out. We helped out de Havilland, Algoma Steel, St Marys Paper, Spruce Falls, Provincial Papers and others, but it wasn't just some kind of a giveaway. It certainly wasn't off the property tax base.

The fact is that during the deepest recession that we faced since the 1930's, our government wasn't going to stand by and allow all these industries and the thousands of jobs and the crucial economic activity that that means to each of our respective communities to completely crash and burn and wash our hands of it. We weren't about to do that.

That is a whole lot different than being in the midst—some would argue at the end, but at the very least in the midst—of the greatest economic boom we've ever seen, with the government already giving \$6 billion a year in tax breaks benefiting the very wealthy the most, deciding that after you've cut money for education, for hospitals, for social services, all the things that the working, middle-class people—which is the bulk of the population in this province—need in order to maintain the standard of living that has given us the honour of being chosen by the United Nations four times the best country in the world—and we are the biggest province in that country; you've got to feel good about that.

We're losing all of that. We're losing it because of the direct actions and policies of the Mike Harris government. They have decided that having slashed and cut money being spent in our hospitals; changed the formula and cutting money to our education system, leaving kids all across Ontario with special needs not being able to get into the classroom; cut social services—you're not going to be let off the hook just because there has been an election. It's still your policy. You're still the government that took great pride—and I always think of this every time you stand up and pretend to care about the homeless—you're the government that cut almost 22% of the income of the poorest of the poor.

So the same government during the same economic boom says: "We're going to cut 21.6% of the income of the poorest of the poor, then we're going to change the tax system so that we can give the bulk of \$6 billion of tax cuts to the very wealthy, and we're going to cut all the wonderful programs and services that have made this the greatest country in the world to live in." Now they've decided that in the midst of all of that, the next most important thing for them to do is to find a way to give hockey millionaires \$32 million.

This is the essence of what we have the greatest difficulty with. It's the notion that while this government talks about caring about the homeless and health care and education—and yes, I do keep coming back to those things because they are some of the most important things that make our society, and you cut them.

T600

You talk about wanting to have a balanced budget, nothing is more important than balancing those books, and yet we would have already had a balanced budget if you had made absolutely no cuts but had not given the tax gift to the very wealthy. We would already have a balanced budget, and we wouldn't have had to endure the cuts.

When this government stands up and says that everything they're doing is about the economy and it's about

the overall good and that whole speech, all they're really saying is, "We made sure that we took care of our friends." Obviously, hockey millionaires are a part of that, and equally obviously, those kids who need educational assistance to participate in our education system are not important, are not the priority.

That is the essence of our opposition to this proposal. The fact that both the Tories and the Liberals feel that this is good economic policy means that unless we do something like we've done today, which is to make an opposition day, which is one of the days we're entitled to spend the time in this House talking about an issue that we think is important, if it weren't for this, there wouldn't be much debate around this issue, because there are only nine of us. But we are using one of our opposition days to put this issue on the floor, because we don't believe that you can morally justify spending this kind of money on hockey millionaires when there are so many other issues and policies and programs and services in our community that benefit the overwhelming majority of middle-class working families.

We look forward to engaging in the debate with the other two parties and ultimately to seeing how close a vote we do indeed have at the appointed time.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I've been listening with some interest to the last few minutes of the member for Hamilton West's remarks. I want to clarify a few things up front.

First of all, we're not asking the taxpayers of Hamilton, Ontario, or any other city in Ontario, to give the owners of the Corel Centre in Ottawa a tax break, even though we have such facilities around the province. If you want to take Hamilton as an example, the community which the honourable member represents, we have Copps Coliseum. He can correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't think they pay a single red cent in property taxes anywhere to the municipality—

Mr Christopherson: Who built it and paid for it?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): The province and Hamilton.

Hon Mr Eves: Yes, the province and Hamilton built Copps Coliseum. We are not asking the taxpayers in Hamilton, though, to subsidize the Corel Centre in Ottawa or—

Interjection: Yes, you are.

Hon Mr Eves: No, we are not.

First of all, know your facts. There is no money, no cheque being sent to anyone. Not one single hockey team, not one single hockey player, will get one red cent out of the proposed regulation that we plan on introducing. All we're planning on doing is making a level playing field for a privately owned arena that happened to house professional sporting teams in the province of Ontario, if they choose to have a tax rate anywhere from virtually zero—slightly above zero—to the current commercial rate.

That will be a range of fairness, just like the range of fairness that municipalities have now for any commercial or industrial property within their jurisdiction. It can always be from zero to the current rate; they just can't go above the rate, if they're above the provincial average of 3.3. So you should know what you're talking about before you start talking.

No money is going to be sent anywhere. Municipalities are going to be able to have the opportunity to put their facilities on the same playing field, if they choose, as facilities in other municipalities that maybe were built with the taxpayers' money, maybe were built with partly municipal money and partly Ontario money, maybe even federal money. We're just giving them an opportunity to go there if they want to.

Having said that, another incorrect assumption that's being made is that the municipality and the province will have to eat this amount. The municipality has the ability to recapture that money from other commercial taxpayers, not residential taxpayers—I've also heard honourable members opposite from the third party talking in the media etc, and I've read and heard in the media where people are saying, "We're going to have a 2% levy across the board on residential taxpayers to pay for this." That cannot happen under the legislation. It has to be recaptured from within the commercial class.

In the case of the city of Toronto, they can do whatever they want, it's up to them at the end of the day, but the amount of the tax rate that would go up on every other commercial property in the city of Toronto to lower rates on those facilities would be infinitesimal. It's not going to be a huge amount, but they don't have to do it. Nobody is making them do it.

Mr Christopherson: You don't have much for the homeless, Ernie.

Hon Mr Eves: He talks about the homeless. This year we gave the homeless \$100 million, and the federal government is giving them absolutely zippo, zero, not one red cent. Hello. Is anybody home over there in Hamilton West?

He talks about giving tax cuts. Tax reductions in the province have resulted in a net tax revenue increase to the province of Ontario of \$6.5 billion in 1999 compared to what we got in 1995.

I know you don't like to hear this, because I've heard your leader, and I've heard the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, his former riding, talk in 1995 about how our revenue base was going to go down by \$5 billion. I don't hear them regurgitating that totally inaccurate prediction they made in 1995, because the result is not only has it not gone down by \$5 billion; it's gone up \$6.5 billion. You're only out \$11.5 billion. I'm glad you're not running the finances of the province of Ontario if you screw up by \$11.5 billion a year. We can't afford to make those kind of mistakes on this side of the House. We actually have to be fairly accurate as to what's going to happen.

He talks about the tax reductions we've given. The tax reductions we gave to the people at the lowest end of the income scale where they start paying taxes, more modest,

they got a tax reduction of 41.7%, and we scaled it down to about 14% to 15% for those at the top of the income scale. We did that on purpose to help those at the more modest income levels, although you wouldn't know that from listening to the members opposite from the third party.

The member from Hamilton West was talking about quotes from other people. I'd like to read a few quotes into the record with respect to his party's position on these things. Jeff Harder on November 5, 1999:

"NDP leader Howard Hampton is counting on Duncan's" blah, blah, blah, "so voters won't notice his hypocritical line of questioning.

"Hampton's latest target is the spectre of property tax breaks for NHL arenas...."

"What Hampton seems to be willing to forget is that he was at Bob Rae's cabinet table when they handed out hundreds of millions of dollars to rich businessmen. They included miners, paper makers, a bus manufacturer and a multinational, Quebec-based transportation company. The list goes on. Most of it is written in red ink."

Mr Christopherson: Working people don't rate in your mind, do they?

Hon Mr Eves: We're talking about people who own the mills, own the bus companies—that's who you gave the breaks to. You didn't write cheques to individual workers. You wrote cheques to the owners of the companies, the very multimillionaires that you're here denigrating today in the Legislature.

It's somewhat hypocritical, too, or somewhat, sorry, inconsistent—I withdraw the word hypocritical—when the same NDP when they were in power, not that I say this is a bad thing but this is what they did, on December 1, 1991, passed a bill called the City of Windsor Act. Do you know what that bill did? The bill allowed the city of Windsor to acquire and exempt certain land from property taxes to construct and develop a multi-use facility envisioned complete with a sports and entertainment centre. It was good enough then.

Did you vote for that, I say to the member for Hamilton West? Did you vote for that piece of legislation? How can you possibly be criticizing this if you voted for that? Hello. I'm not hearing anything over there.

All the government is trying to do here is to respond to an inequity in the property taxation area with respect to sporting facilities in Ontario, especially those that happen to be privately owned, that house professional teams. To date, there are only four such facilities in the province. Three of them, the Air Canada Centre, Maple Leaf Gardens and the SkyDome, are in the city of Toronto and the Corel Centre, of course, is in the city of Ottawa, in Kanata.

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There's a level playing field that we're trying to create within Ontario, an opportunity for municipalities that choose to do that. Also, there's a playing field that we have to think about, if we're talking about the NHL or the NBA or the CFL or any of those other things, so that they can have a level playing field with teams in British

Columbia, in Calgary, in Edmonton or in Madison Square Garden in New York, for that matter.

If those municipalities think that those teams are important enough to the economy of their area or their municipality, they may choose to give them a partial break, an entire break or no break as they see fit, being the local elected representatives, to do that. We have said that whatever they decide to do, we will match that on our side with respect to the education tax. If they choose to recoup that money from the rest of the commercial class, we automatically, according to legislation that's already in place, will do the same.

I might point out that they have the ability to do that in many other areas. Municipalities have many optional tools for property classes. They can phase in property tax assessments. They can already choose optional classes such as office towers and shopping centres. Some choose to, some choose not to. They can set graduated rates if they want. They can choose different scenarios. They can protect hardship cases even among the commercial class if they choose to. They can exempt entirely, if they want, disabled people. They can exempt entirely, if they want, seniors. They can exempt entirely, if they want, charities, or partially. They have to exempt them at least to the tune of 40%.

I think those are decisions that are appropriately and properly made at the local level because they're the people who are closest to the individual taxpayers, closest to the people in their community, and they know which individuals or entities need assistance or don't need assistance.

All we're saying, just like all those other cases, is that if these municipalities decide to opt for that, then we will match them on the educational side, in terms of our rate going down in a proportionate amount. I think that's a fair and equitable thing to do.

I would point out, as I've pointed out many times, that this is not going to solve the problem for the NHL. This is an infinitesimal little part of their problem. Until the league, the owners and the players sit down and agree that they are going to have a revenue-sharing plan like other professional leagues have, that they're going to have a salary cap like other professional leagues have, until they sit down and agree to address those two very fundamental problems, at least 90% to 95% of their problem, in my opinion, is going to remain unsolved.

All we're trying to do on the provincial level is to give those particular municipalities that happen to house those facilities, that house those teams, the opportunity, if they choose to avail themselves of it, to put their facilities on a level playing field with others within the province of Ontario, within the country of Canada and within North America.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm very pleased this afternoon to participate in this debate. I will attempt during the time that I have to point out what I believe to be the false assumptions on the basis of this resolution.

As the leadoff speaker for the NDP has pointed out, this is really taking money away from the good things that we would want to support in Ontario, especially health care, especially education, especially those people who may be homeless and all of those who need the support of our government. Indeed, the unintended effect of this resolution may lead to the province as a whole and individual municipalities having less tax revenue to make a contribution, for any level of government to be able to contribute to the things that I just mentioned. That would be my premise this afternoon.

I come from Ottawa Centre. Ottawa-Carleton is the region. The national capital area is a fascinating part of our country. Ottawa-Carleton is a great part to live in, the second-largest populated area in Ontario, and we have an NHL franchise called the Ottawa Senators. They happen to be number one in the league today, in the league totally, from among all 26 teams. We're very proud of that.

We're also very proud of the contribution the team has made not only in terms of the image of Ottawa as being a staid place, not an exciting place to be—of course when you go there you see immediately how wrong that image may be—but in being able to promote the whole area. I might add, I will also outline its economic contributions, which I believe are germane to the resolution that has been put forward today.

The owner of the Senators has stated I believe quite clearly and eloquently that they are more than willing to pay their fair share of taxes. That is stated with some credibility, because everyone knows that the exchange rate makes it quite difficult in this particular field. It doesn't generally. It helps general exporters of products, whether it's software or whether it's cars or whatever. It's attractive because we have a low dollar. But when you're paying for things like hockey players, you're paying in American dollars, and that is a distinct handicap for Canadian teams.

Also, the nature of the taxes and some surtaxes and other charges that the Senators and the Corel Centre in particular have to pay add an extra burden to their ability to be competitive and indeed to survive. The property tax alone for the Senators has gone up over 100% every year. Don't hold me to the specific figure, but the tax they paid for the first year was less than \$1 million. It's now \$4.6 million, and there is a challenge to that assessment, and indeed it's suggested that their tax may be \$7 million. This is an enormous burden for this particular team that makes a contribution to the local economy.

The Ottawa Senators pay to the province, as I said, \$4.6 million, which is more than each and every one of the total American hockey teams combined. In other words, the Ottawa Senators alone pay more than the Toronto Maple Leafs in their property taxes—I don't know what it is; it's less than \$2 million for the Toronto Maple Leafs—they pay \$4.6 million—and the Montreal Canadiens pay about \$11 million. So you can see that if we put all the Canadian teams together, we pay about six times what's paid in the American context. Stick with

that argument for a while. That just affects our ability to survive in Canada.

I suggest to you that there needs to be a recognition of what I would call some adjustment. Of course, the people who are against looking at making some adjustment never like to recognize—people will know there are many tax credits, there are all kinds of supports for the high-tech industry; for example, people in the automotive industry, people in the manufacturing industry. Why? Because they want to keep a business alive, and the NDP supported this. I know they did that. I have no trouble with trying to keep a paper mill alive in northern Ontario because it provides jobs. But we're talking about 1,275 direct jobs in the Ottawa-Carleton area, and not even including all the spinoff jobs that has created.

What I believe the NDP has failed to realize is the role of the Senators in having stimulated not only through their own direct operations—they've developed restaurants, they've developed theatres, they have developed all kinds of new businesses that have strengthened—

Interjection.

Mr Patten: He doesn't want to listen—that have strengthened all kinds of other businesses. The surveys that have been done will tell you that the people in Kanata will tell you that their business community—and I know the member for Carleton would also know that other businesses have sprung up because of the presence of the Senators.

So my position is not directly related to if you make an adjustment in taxes of a couple of million dollars—the NDP talks about \$32 million. It's not \$32 million; in the case of the Senators it may be a couple of million dollars less than they are paying at the moment. But he fails to recognize the ongoing value and fails to appreciate that indeed we're talking about a team that may disappear if it's not able to make it. The team is losing about \$7 million to \$10 million a year. They're in first place in the league, they have the third-lowest payroll in all of hockey, their fan support is terrific, and they're still having trouble making it.

In my opinion, there are three ingredients as to why that is so. The first is that their property tax is very high. Second, they have to pay for something that the NDP forced them to pay, and that was the interchange. In 1991-92, you forced them to pay for the interchange for people to get to the Corel Centre to watch hockey games. Should they pay something towards that? Yes, I believe they should. Was it fair for them to pay the whole amount, \$35 million, the \$2.6 million a year they're paying back for a loan from the province? No, it isn't. Now that Corel is building across the street—

Mr Christopherson: Doesn't that road go to a hospital too?

Mr Patten: That whole area needed that interchange, except they didn't need it quite at that time. They said, "Maybe five to 10 years out." It's now almost 10 years out. Believe me, they would have needed it even if the Senators were not there.

So now we get new businesses that are delighted with that, and they're all saying to the Senators, "Thank you very much for paying the price of the interchange for the development of the whole area." Then we get an NDP resolution to force that on them, when they are facing survival and they are crying, which doesn't acknowledge the contribution they make to the whole area.

As was pointed out by the finance minister, the Corel Centre is not municipally owned. Some of the other arenas may be, and my friend from Hamilton will be discussing this perhaps a little later. So the people of Ontario, in terms of the construction of the facility and purchase of the land, put not one red cent into that facility, which is a net asset to the city of Kanata, to the region of Ottawa-Carleton, to eastern Ontario and to the province of Ontario.

I say again to my friend from Hamilton West, at no point have the owners ever said, "We are not prepared to pay our fair share." "Give us an opportunity to pay on the same basis as any other business, without any surtaxes. Charging us for the interchange, jacking up the property tax almost exponentially will not help us to be competitive," even though at the moment they're the number one team. Wouldn't that be a shame, if the number one team leaves? They'd leave because they have too much of a burden.

What would we lose if they did leave? The economic development corporation in the Ottawa-Carleton area—it's an arm's-length corporation that does studies on the economic health of the region, makes proposals as to strategies—what did they say? What is the economic impact of the Ottawa Senators? They're saying nationally—and they're putting this over a 10-year period, so divide it by 10, if you will—they will contribute \$1.2 billion to \$1.4 billion in economic activity, including \$420 million to \$460 million in taxes over the next 10-year period of time. So we're talking \$42 million to \$46 million for the federal government. Should the federal government do something? You're darned right they should, but I haven't heard from them yet. I will be anxious to hear what they have to say to support this to happen.

Locally what does it mean? It includes a \$750-million contribution, or \$117 million to \$120 million in taxes. If they go, \$400 million to \$500 million in economic activity would leave our local economy. I see one of my colleagues on the other side acknowledging this. He knows that—he lives in Kanata—and this would be a tremendous drain.

That's not all. The NDP talks about simply property tax. Let me give you a little bit of an example of the contribution in taxes collected at the provincial level. In 1998, PST \$18 million; paid on purchases, another \$1 million; the surtax collected, \$6.5 million; capital tax \$2.3 million. It goes on and on.

While the resolution is confined to just property tax, I'm suggesting that today you have to think bigger than that. You have to know what happens. When a company sets up business and they hire one or two people, it's

worth more than just those one or two people. If the business can survive it means that money is circulating, it means that it helps other jobs. There is a factor of anywhere from 1.3 to seven jobs that are worth something in various industries. It depends on the industry; I grant you that. So there is always a value added as soon as you add a new business. When you pull it away, it isn't just the loss of that particular number of people, it's also who else is affected by what you have.

I did a little bit of homework on this. In 1993, the NDP provided \$4.2 billion for theatres, dinner theatres, drama, choreographers, musicians and places that host plays and ballets and performances etc. I support that. Why is it done? It's done because we know it attracts a lot of Americans, a lot of people from other provinces to come to Toronto because they consider it to be an entertainment centre, one of the finest in the world, I might add. I agree with that. It's a little investment, and that's what I think the resolution fails to appreciate. When you provide an opportunity to operate without undue burdens, all of a sudden you are stimulating a whole variety of other things to happen, let alone the numbers of jobs that you directly are able to employ and the numbers of people indirectly that you support as well. I just want to point out that your own history as an NDP government will show that you acknowledged that very fact, and it seems to me your resolution today is in contravention of that.

What do the people of Ottawa-Carleton have to say? There is some division on their concern related to the survival of the Senators. I would like to point out that an extensive survey was done by a reputable group, Compass, a report commissioned by the Ottawa Citizen, on the attitudes of people in the region. It involved people from all 11 municipalities in the Ottawa-Carleton region, not just Ottawa. Perhaps the best way to read this is to give you a summary of it.

"The Ottawa Senators and their advocates in local government have certainly got their message through to the local public." An extraordinary 89% declare that they are aware of the issue, according to the poll.

"Nearly as many, 84%, want governments to move at least part way"—and I agree with that, part way—"towards putting Canadian teams on an equal subsidy and tax footing as their American competitors. Most of those favouring government action feel strongly. Among Ottawans as a whole, 59% 'definitely' want government to take action while another 25% want government to 'probably' take such action.

"Of the minority opposing government action, 20% say that they would change their opinion if the beneficiary Canadian hockey team undertook a binding legal commitment to stay in Canada for at least 10 years in exchange for the financial considerations.

"Advocates ... for the Senators and other NHL teams have called for a reduction of some of the tax and subsidy disadvantages facing Canadian teams. When asked if they would support a completely level playing field ... the

same degree of subsidy and tax relief as experienced by American teams, a near two-thirds ... expressed support."

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I'm not going to read the rest of this, because I want to comment on that. In other words, the polling has been done by a variety—this isn't the only one; there was one done in February of last year as well. There is support, because people realize what it means to their particular community. This is exceptionally important. In other words, if we lose the Senators, we're going to lose thousands of jobs and we'll lose a major engine that helps promote an image of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, in terms of tourism etc. So at the end of the day it seems to me that the NDP is prepared to stop an adjustment in a tax arrangement that without doubt provides an incredible contribution economically, socially, demographically, recreationally, any which way you want to see it.

I haven't even talked about the people who feel that Canadian hockey is part of our heritage and that's what is distinctive about us and our heritage, who we are and what kind of people we are historically. They're prepared to stop that, make the false assumption that without the \$2 million or \$3 million, this will somehow be taken away from health and education, when in fact if the team leaves you have lost \$40 million-odd annually directly, let alone all of the other spinoff effects; you've damaged and hurt a part of the economy of eastern Ontario.

That is my thesis. I'm happy to participate in this today. I believe the Senators are important to our part of Ontario, but to Ontario as a whole as well as to Canada, because we want to play our part to raise the kind of money that can make a contribution to the broader whole, which helps all of us have a high standard of living, a compassionate society and a society that also is able to enjoy participating in international hockey.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I've been listening carefully to the debate. Let me begin by making a couple of comments.

My friend from Ottawa—I appreciate where he's coming from, because all politics are local—would have the public believe that we have some kind of poor charity on our hands; we've got a basket case on our hands that we have to bail out, while they put the gun to our head before they go to the United States. People who are watching this debate this afternoon should know that the owner and managers of this team made a conscious decision to pay the top three players on this team in Ottawa \$7.2 million, and if Mr Yashin were playing the amount would be even higher. If the Ottawa Senators can pay three of their top players \$7.2 million—and an unspecified amount for Mr Yashin, who's refusing to play right now because he wants more—then surely to goodness we can't call them a basket case. We can't lead the public to believe that this is some poor unfortunate organization that without government help is going to flee to the States. I'd be interested to know what Mr Bryden makes. I'd be interested to know what the team as a whole makes. In terms of what they're paying their top players,

my goodness, it's hard for us to stand here today and argue that we have to have some kind of bailout.

I listened to the finance minister, who would have us believe that there's no cost to Ontarians by putting this legislation forward, that somehow if the municipalities do something and the province antes up, there is somehow no cost. Of course there is a cost, because provincial law requires that if one property tax rate gets lower, others have to make up the difference. Owners of commercial establishments in Toronto and in Kanata would have to make up that difference. The finance minister would have you believe that's a very small amount and we shouldn't worry about those things, but I think the public needs to be reminded that if Ottawa and Toronto were to come forward and do just that, change the property class, bounce that on to some other commercial property owners, we're then on the hook in this province for \$60 million, which is the education portion. That's what we give up.

The finance minister was very clear in the *National Post* on October 29: "The province could be out \$16 million on an annualized basis, and we'll have to make that up elsewhere or hopefully receive revenue from elsewhere," said Mr Eves."

There is a cost, because now we're going to have to find \$16 million from some other government program to help finance what we want to do for this hockey team. So there is a cost and the cost may be \$16 million less for health care next year or \$16 million less for education or \$16 million less for the homeless or \$16 million less for any other legitimate priority that this government should have. But what is the government's priority? To try and bail out the Senators. That's what it is. There is a cost, and people out there who are watching this debate need to know that.

Members seem to think that if we just give the Ottawa Senators what they want, if we just encourage Toronto or encourage Ottawa to change the property tax class and if we just lose our \$16 million that could go to other more legitimate things, then maybe the Senators are going to stay. It's not as if the Senators' owner, Rod Bryden, is going to be happy if he gets this cut in his property tax, because as a matter of fact, on October 30 he said in a press conference that he needs \$10 million or \$12 million in help from all three levels of government.

He wants to win the write-off property taxes, which will save him \$4 million; he wants an exemption from the provincial government on amusement taxes, which would save him another \$3.5 million; and then he wants another \$5 million from the federal government. If he gets those things, then maybe he'll stay. At what point do we say to some of these folks, who are not poor by any stretch and who have made conscious decisions to spend big money paying their players: "No, we've had enough. We're not going to have the gun to our head because frankly you just keep upping the ante?"

If you look at the history of what's happened to some teams who have done just that, the reality has been that they have gone on their merry way after they got their

money from the provincial and federal governments and they've opened up shop somewhere else.

Look at the Winnipeg Jets. In 1995 they threatened to move the team to the US if the Conservative government of Gary Filmon didn't cough up \$50 million to keep the team in Winnipeg. You know what? The Filmon government coughed up \$50 million to keep the Winnipeg Jets in Winnipeg. What happened? After that hockey season was over, the Winnipeg Jets picked up their bags and they moved themselves to Arizona; now they're in Phoenix. You know what they're doing now? Now they're in Phoenix, Arizona, and the owners are now demanding that the public pay for a new arena or they're going to leave Phoenix. It just never ends.

Let me give you two more examples. The Pittsburgh Penguins today are so far in debt that they've got Mario Lemieux trying to buy the team. No doubt that comes from the fact that they owe him millions of dollars and they haven't been able to pay. But it's important to note that in 1997 the franchise threatened to relocate to another US community to extract a \$13-million bailout from taxpayers. The owners agreed to stay in Pittsburgh for 10 years if they got the \$13 million. Less than two years later, after receiving the \$13 million, they were in court trying to nullify that agreement while declaring bankruptcy, and that whole issue of bankruptcy has only been stalled by Mario Lemieux's trying to now buy that team.

Let me give you another case, the New Jersey Devils. They got major concessions in the lease at Meadowlands in 1995. In 1999, the owners are now asking the state government for \$100 million of taxpayers' dollars to build a hockey-basketball complex in Newark, and they're saying, "Pay up or we're going to move our team."

It just doesn't end. Anyone in this assembly today who thinks going forward with the proposal that the province has is going to end the demands of Mr Bryden had better think again, because he's not finished. If he doesn't get what he wants, he is still threatening to move the team starting at Christmas of this year.

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They've made a conscious decision to pay their players the kinds of sums of money they have. That's a very clear decision that the team owners and the managers made. But you know what, Mr Speaker? Over and above the break that this provincial government is going to give them—because that's what it is—and over and above what they're asking from the feds, do you know that the Ottawa Senators have established their own charitable foundation to run their hockey team? As a result of having a charitable foundation, called the Ottawa Senators Foundation, the Senators are currently exempt from paying entertainment tax on home games. That saves them another \$3.5 million in entertainment tax on an annual basis.

Imagine the real registered charities out there, how they must feel, doing work on behalf of people who are homeless, on behalf of people who have health care

needs. How do they feel knowing that an NHL hockey team is using that kind of tax exemption?

There is something wrong with what's happening here, and there's something wrong with a provincial government that would say: "That loophole is OK. By the way, we'll let you do that, and further, we're going to up the ante and we're going to give you another potential \$16 million more." Because that's what it is. There is a cost. It's a cost to the rest of us in terms of programs that won't be funded or programs that will be cancelled to cover that \$16-million cost.

If the NHL wants to deal with this, they've got a couple of options. First of all, they've got to look at a cap on salaries for NHL players. One of the reports that was done by the federal government looking into this issue reported that since 1991-92 players' salaries have risen over 400%. I have trouble feeling sympathy for a hockey team that's prepared to pay their players that and then come back to the province, the federal government, the municipal government, looking for help. I really do. So if the NHL wants to do something, they've got to deal with a cap on salaries. I understand from the negotiations that went on that that won't be done until the next round of collective bargaining, which is in the year 2004. So we've got no guarantee that money that's coming won't be used to ante up salaries for players when at the same time those teams are still crying that they can't afford to pay their property taxes.

The second thing is that the NHL should really look at revenue sharing in the way the CFL does, so that the revenue that comes in primarily for the bigger teams that do really well is shared.

The province of Ontario, the federal government and municipal governments should not get into the trap of trying to find ways and means to support what's happening here. Because what is happening here is conscious decisions being made to pay players a lot of money and at the same crying foul when they're supposed to pay property taxes, like every other commercial business in this province has to pay. Are there other private commercial enterprises that can go forward and say, "We don't want to pay anything"? We shouldn't be getting ourselves into that kind of trap.

I read some of the comments by Senator Frank Mahovlich, who is a Hockey Hall of Famer, who said this week: "It would be like pouring money into a black hole. The NHL has some structural problems and they have to resolve those. If we gave them money, it would just disappear. All the agents would line up and they'd tell the teams they have all that government money to pay their players." Of course they do, because if they don't have to pay the property tax, they can put that money back into salaries. If they don't have to pay \$3.8 million of entertainment tax, then they can put that money back into salaries, or profits. That's what some people who are in the know have to say about what the government proposes here.

I say this to the government: If you want to do something useful with respect to hockey, you should take a

look right now at some of the resolutions that are being circulated by some small communities which say, "We encourage the provincial government"—I'll read it all the way through. "Be it resolved that the council of the corporation of the municipality of French River"—which is in my riding—"supports the Village of Merrickville-Wolford resolution regarding the reinstatement of the recreation grant for municipalities of 5,000 or less population."

If you want to do something useful about hockey, reinstate the recreation grants so that kids who are playing minor hockey right across our province will have some support to do that, and we can support those hundreds and hundreds of coaches out there who are spending hours of volunteer time coaching those kids, making sure they're off the street, making sure they're out of trouble, making sure they have something to do in their community.

I think the government approach on this is dead wrong, absolutely dead wrong. I regret that the province is seriously considering foregoing \$16 million of revenue that can be used for so much better purposes in order to give to a hockey team, its owners and its rich players, who really don't need it.

Hon Mr Sterling: I've had a considerable bit of experience with this issue as the Ottawa Senators play out of the area that I represent, at the Corel Centre. I thought it might be useful for members of the Legislature to understand a little bit about the historical context in which the Corel Centre was built—was tried to be built, I guess. The first was the zoning debacle they went through. The second was going through the building process, obtaining the franchise, which I guess came before the building process, and what has transpired over that period of time since the Senators started to play.

First of all, I recognize that this is not an easy issue. It is not an easy issue to explain to the public why the government should be bringing forward some kind of relief in this area, especially since hockey players are, in my view, overpaid for what they do. I understand that. But so too are a lot of people who receive I guess tax credits. One of the areas of tax credits which this province has given is an Ontario film and television tax credit, an Ontario production services tax credit to the movie industry so that they can come primarily to Toronto and produce movies in this area. Those tax credits far outstrip the potential tax credit that we are talking about here. Those tax credits amount to some \$60 million.

Where was the NDP when these tax credit moves were brought forward? Do they favour highly paid movie stars benefiting from these other kinds of tax credits? I understand the concept of these people obtaining this kind of money as being very difficult to explain to people who are working for a living and receiving middle-income compensation.

Let me talk about the history. Back in 1989-90, Bruce Firestone of Terrace developments started to talk about going to the NHL and asking for a franchise. A lot of people didn't believe in Bruce or didn't believe in the

ability of the Ottawa area to get an NHL franchise. Ironically, one of the areas of the province they were bidding against was the city of Hamilton. One of the things the city of Hamilton put on the table to the NHL board of governors was that they had a tax-free stadium for a franchise to come and occupy in Hamilton. That was one of their selling points to the NHL board of governors way back in 1990. So it's a little odd that we heard today the member for Hamilton West complaining that this government, at this late date nine years later, might have offered some kind of equity or fairness in terms of the Ottawa-versus-Hamilton situation.

What happened was that Bruce Firestone owned a piece of land where the Corel Centre is presently built. It was necessary for Mr Firestone, under the name of Terrace developments, to get a change in the zoning, and the NDP government of the day put Bruce Firestone and everybody who was in favour of NHL hockey in Ottawa-Carleton through every possible hoop and obstacle that they could possibly dream up. They claimed that the Corel Centre was going on a valuable piece of agricultural land. I've got to say to you, when I came down here and I saw the NDP, the same NDP government approving the rezoning of thousands of acres around the city of Markham for development, which was much more valuable agricultural land than the land that the Corel Centre sits on now, I got angry because the NDP government spent close to \$1 million opposing the Corel Centre in 1990 and 1991.

1650

That not only put the promoters, the people who were trying to put this package together, at a considerable financial disadvantage to begin with, because it cost them probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of twice that to fight the government of the day, which was driven by Queen's Park, the NDP government at that time, against the rezoning of that particular piece of land, but it also put the developers and the builders of the Corel Centre into the recessionary period which fell around 1991, 1992 when interest rates started to go up. If they had been able to build six months earlier or a year earlier, if they had had any kind of cooperation with the NDP government, there would have been a saving probably in the neighbourhood of \$20 million to \$25 million over the last seven or eight years.

The NDP put every roadblock in the way of the Ottawa Senators and the hopes of eastern Ontario to have an NHL team. I find it a little distasteful that the NDP now comes forward with a resolution to say, "You the government"—which has been the only senior government to step forward and say we'll do something for the people of eastern Ontario to retain the Senators—"we're against this," and puts up these phony arguments about the fact that this is going to take away from the wealth of the province in terms of what we gain in taxes.

The member for Ottawa Centre put forward a very convincing argument and one that I believe in. The fact of the matter is that if the Ottawa Senators go, the provincial revenues will go down. They won't go up as a

result of what I would call a rather minor forgiveness of taxes to the Corel Centre.

I might also add, if the Senators ever move out of that particular arena, it will be up to the local community to decide whether or not they will increase the taxes or they will leave them as they would be. In other words, the day after the Ottawa Senators go, if that ever happens—and I hope it doesn't—the city of Kanata and the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton can decide to up the tax rate and can regain everything that was in forgiveness before.

I think the finance minister has said that, at maximum, this would mean a cost of \$16 million to the provincial government. No one expects the Air Canada Centre or some of the sports centres here in Toronto to be given that kind of a situation because they're not in the same kind of position as they are in Ottawa.

I want to say this to my colleagues in Toronto and any other parts of the province: eastern Ontario is not very happy at times when they see things like the SkyDome built here in Toronto primarily at the expense of the provincial taxpayer and then when we come forward and say, "Can you help us out a little bit?" "No, no, we can't because this is helping out rich hockey players and all the rest of it." The SkyDome cost Ontario taxpayers somewhere between \$250 million and \$300 million. That was our contribution in the province of Ontario to major league baseball in the city of Toronto.

The people of eastern Ontario say, "Hey, give me a break." If we can help the people out in Toronto to get major league baseball, can we not help out in some way to keep a hockey team in the city of Ottawa or the Ottawa-Carleton area?

Also, the Copps Coliseum: I sat in Bill Davis's cabinet when the Copps Coliseum was approved. I was part of the cabinet that said, "We'll give some money to the city of Hamilton." I think we split the cost of the Copps Coliseum. I think it seats 18,000 to 20,000 people. But the province of Ontario paid for half of that. The province of Ontario didn't give a plug nickel to the building of the Corel Centre, not a plug nickel. In fact, as I mentioned previously, the government of Ontario did nothing but step in the way and try to make the job of the developers more difficult than they did before.

I might add that when the Ottawa Senators started to play hockey in Ottawa, they played at the Civic Centre which is down in Lansdowne Park, and it was a hockey arena which had about 9,000 or 10,000 seats. They had to move to a larger venue because, of course, that wouldn't support it. But when they played there for about a year and a half, they paid no municipal taxes. Yes, they paid some rent, but that rent was nowhere close to the kind of municipal taxes that they are now paying at the Corel Centre.

I guess what you want to ask yourself is—and Mr Eves, the finance minister, talked about this a little bit—do you want municipalities, do you want the province building arenas or is it better off to encourage the private

sector to build those arenas and take the risks associated with it?

I have lived through, now, the building of the Dome, and I've got to tell you, after seeing what happened with the building of the Dome, how the cost got out of control and the ultimate losses to our taxpayers of \$300 million, I'd rather say to private enterprise, "We'll help you along in terms of getting this thing going, but we don't want to own this problem as time goes on."

I heard the member for Nickel Belt talk about other jurisdictions and where NHL clubs had been demanding various different kinds of concessions from different municipalities. One of the municipalities that she did not mention was Minneapolis in Minnesota. Minneapolis was running up against the same problem that I guess we now face in Ottawa. Minneapolis said, "No, we are not going to help you out"—the Minnesota North Stars. So the Minnesota North Stars moved south to Dallas. I guess it's five or six years since the North Stars moved to Dallas. Do you know what Minneapolis is doing? They are building a 100% taxpayers' dollars, brand-new hockey arena which they are going to give to a new NHL franchise to ask them to come back to Minneapolis to play NHL hockey. Do you know why they're doing that? It's not because they are friends of the owners of a team or anything like that. It's because the people of Minneapolis and the business leaders and the community have found that when the hockey team moved so did a lot of the excitement of their city, the attractiveness of their city to move in business into their area, to attract new business in their area.

About two weeks ago I talked to the president of Mitel, which is a firm which employs about 600 or 700 people in the Kanata area. Kirk Mandy is the president and CEO of Mitel, and he said to me, "Norm, you cannot believe how important the Ottawa Senators hockey team is to our business, the high-tech business." It's not because it offers any kind of direct financial benefit, but those companies have a tough time competing for human capital. They are very much concerned and need to attract very skilled people to the community of Ottawa-Carleton. One of their biggest selling points is their ability to say, "There's a major league sports team in our community." There's nothing more impressive to many people who are involved in business than to be able to go down to the Corel Centre and see a hockey game.

1700

I also want to correct something put forward by the member for Nickel Belt, and that is this whole argument about a charity foundation. That was a nuance that was put forward by somebody associated with the team. I believe there was a meeting that took place between the finance minister and some of the people involved with the Senators organization. They were quickly told that there was no way that this professional team or any other professional team in Ontario could apply as a foundation and therefore escape their responsibility to pay entertainment tax. That was put off the table by this province. It was never even considered as a possibility. But I must

admit that Mr Bryden is somewhat desperate in terms of being able to put forward and keep the Senators in town.

The last thing I want to say is that over the last little while some of the federal government politicians and I have been talking back and forth about this particular issue. I must say that I'm somewhat disappointed by their attitude towards Mr Bryden and the Ottawa hockey team. They seem to be involved in this and trying to throw some kind of hue or scorn on Mr Bryden.

Mr Bryden, incidentally, is a big-time Grit, a big fundraiser for the Liberal Party.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): A very wise man.

Hon Mr Sterling: Some people thrust forward and say he's a very wise man.

In a political sense, he's no friend of the political party of which I am a member, but I do admire Mr Bryden in terms of being able to keep the team going for this time, particularly when players' salaries have tripled from when he first had players to now.

The Prime Minister and Mr Manley say things like that if Mr Bryden is interested in making profit out of his team, he should go south or he should sell the team, if that's what he's interested in. Mr Bryden has been involved as the founder and CEO of Systemhouse. He's been a tremendous entrepreneur in the Ottawa-Carleton area. He's now the president and CEO of the World Heart Corp, which is a company—

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): A Liberal?

Hon Mr Sterling: It's hard to believe that a Liberal could be this much of an entrepreneur. Be that as it may, he is. He's now the president and CEO of the World Heart Corp, which is developing a mechanical heart which may mean thousands of jobs in the Ottawa area if it becomes successful. I believe that's sort of on the brink, that that might happen in the next year or two. So he's been a tremendous entrepreneur. I truly believe that Mr Bryden is not so much interested in profit. All he's really interested in is cutting his losses.

What he has said to me and I think what he's said to the finance minister and what he's said to Mr Manley and what he's said to the municipal politicians is, "Look, if we can make certain that we do not lose money by whatever methods, I will assure you that I will stay and the Ottawa Senators will stay in Ottawa for a period of time." Maybe that's five years, maybe that's 10 years, but we have to get the other people to the table. We have to ask Mr Manley, we have to ask the federal government.

Hon Mr Baird: Whatever happened to Mr Manley?

Hon Mr Sterling: My friend from Nepean-Carleton asks what happened to Mr Manley. Mr Manley organized a lot of meetings. He had a meeting where he was calling everybody together to put together a team to try to save the Ottawa Senators. What seems to have happened with Mr Manley is that while he is great at organizing meetings, he's not so great at coming forward and putting something on the table that's solid. That's what we need.

We need leadership from Mr Manley so that he can bring forward a concrete proposal to keep the Ottawa Senators in Ottawa-Carleton.

This is a difficult issue. It is a difficult issue, at any time, to deal with competitive issues. That is something we are going to have to deal with here in the province of Ontario over the next little while as we go through a period of time with globalization where our tax rates, our regulations are going to have to match more what is happening in the other parts of the world. I guess this is but a small example.

Last of all, we need a contribution from the hockey players' association and the owners. They have to come to the table. They are going to have to address the situation or, notwithstanding the ability of the Corel Centre to take advantage of this particular tax advantage, the Senators will not be there.

I am a strong supporter of the Ottawa Senators. I understand the arguments of the NDP. They are false. If the Ottawa Senators go, it will not only be a loss of the Ottawa Senators to the eastern Ontario and the Ottawa-Carleton community but it would be a loss to the tax revenues of the province, the city of Kanata and Ottawa-Carleton.

Mr Duncan: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to join this debate this afternoon. Let me begin by saying that I will be voting against the resolution put forward by the NDP. I'd like to have an opportunity to briefly explain my views to the House and to my constituents.

First of all, I am decidedly not a fan of the Ottawa Senators. This has nothing to do with partisan affiliation, as I know nothing in this House has to do with partisan affiliation, particularly judging by the government House leader's speech.

I was, however, particularly impressed by the comments of my colleague from Ottawa Centre. Earlier today he provided me with some background notes on the tax implications of the loss of the Ottawa Senators, quite apart, notionally, from the idea of losing a professional hockey team from our nation's capital and a metropolitan area of in excess of a million people. I think sadly of the loss of the Winnipeg Jets and the Quebec Nordiques and hope that all levels of government can come together to find a meaningful solution to this very complicated issue.

The statistics that are overwhelming that have led me to be supportive of the initiative the government has taken—first of all, the amount of property taxes paid by the Ottawa Senators eclipses that of all teams in the United States combined. That puts us in a very precarious position in terms of maintaining what I think most of us view as one of our country's great exports, that is, hockey. I'd hate to see us export yet another franchise. That's number one. I believe those property taxes amount to the vicinity of a little over \$4 million per year in property taxes alone.

I was quite astounded—and I think it needs to be said, because obviously the New Democrats, who don't give consideration to these things, don't want to talk about the \$57 million in annual provincial revenues of different

sorts that come from the Ottawa Senators franchise and come from the operation of the Corel Centre itself, not to mention the \$58 million in federal taxes that accrue on an annual basis resulting from the operation of the hockey franchise and of the Corel Centre itself.

The challenge, I thought, for the government was, how do you come up with a creative solution? I know the government House leader will find this story interesting. I found the NDP's whole approach to this quite amusing. Some years ago, my community became interested in building what we called a multi-use facility, an arena, but an arena that could be used for more than just hockey. It was at the bottom of the recession, in the 1990-91 period. There was a new government at Queen's Park, and our community, as Hamilton had done before, was looking to the province for help in the financing of this arena. That government at the time was particularly constrained. We all recall the depths of the recession, the decline in provincial revenues and real revenues, but they wanted to help our community. What they did—because they seem to have forgotten their own record on this—was attach a property tax exemption to a piece of land in our community that was going to be used for an arena, and it was a property tax exemption that was specified by them because it was to be operated by the private sector. It was not to be a municipal facility.

1710

I must say, at the time I thought they showed a lot of creativity when they came up with that idea. Because of their financial mismanagement of the province, they had no money to directly invest, as the Davis government had done in the Copps Coliseum. In the intervening years, the interim casino was built and the land was used as a parking lot, but that property tax exemption still applies. It still applies, you'll be pleased to know. In fact, officials at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs still refer to it as "Cooke's folly," referring to Dave Cooke, the then NDP minister.

To make a long story short because I know they've got a problem with subsidizing professional hockey players, the Windsor city council is about to enter into an agreement for the development of that land and guess who's one of the partners in that? Wayne Gretzky. It's a private sector group. In about 30 years, that will revert back. It will revert back to public ownership, but the cost to the province over the ensuing 30 some-odd years is going to be very, very substantial.

So I'm surprised they wouldn't understand what I think is frankly a more creative way of dealing with it: Give the local municipality the right to move within property tax brackets to try and effect a solution to keep these teams here. That's the local option and that makes sense. Like the government House leader, I believe the federal government has to come to the table on this and I believe that this is an important first step. I feel that this resolution is absolutely laughable in light of that particular party's own record and our own experience. I applauded them at the time for what I thought was a creative way of dealing with the province's inability to

finance the development of this type of municipal infrastructure, and find it somewhat humorous that they would take such a different position at this point in time.

The revenues to this province alone from the Ottawa Senators and their franchise will total \$57 million from the operations of the Corel Centre and the franchise itself. The revenues to the federal government: \$58.8 million; municipality: \$6.4 million, to a total of \$120 million per annum, not to mention the importance, as the government House leader did, of having a professional hockey franchise in our nation's capital, something that generates not only revenue for government but an important part of our national pastime of the citizens of that community.

The government, in my view, acted responsibly in their approach to this. This resolution is not only irresponsible in my view, it flies in the face of what the NDP itself did when it was in government. But that was then and this is now. Unfortunately they'll change their position, change to suit their circumstances, circumstances which certainly aren't enviable.

Hon Mr Baird: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this resolution.

Probably more than any other government in our history, our government understands that high taxes kill jobs. Our government understands that high taxes hold our economy back. Our government knows that high taxes hurt prosperity. High taxes lead to high unemployment. Unemployment, of course, is the root cause of poverty.

Our policy has been to cut taxes to create jobs. Income taxes for people; we've taken hundreds of thousands of low-income Ontarians right off the tax rolls. In fact, there are even some low-income Ontarians who pay no provincial income tax but who are stuck paying federal income tax because the federal government wants to tax low- and modest-income Ontarians at a higher rate than we do. In fact, we're not taxing them at all.

We've cut the taxes for small business. We've cut the provincial sales tax for farm building materials to try to encourage investment on our farms and in agricultural operations. We've cut WCB premiums. We've cut taxes for research and development. In fact, on property taxes, which is the centre of the issue we're discussing today, this year we propose to cut property taxes for every residential taxpayer in the province. Because tax cuts help make our economy competitive.

As the Premier said on April 29, 1999, "We constantly review our tax rates to try to be competitive with other jurisdictions." That is something that I strongly believe. We've got to constantly look at our tax regime. Is it competitive in a modern economy?

I concede at the outset that this is not an easy issue. Certainly there is not a unanimous opinion in my constituency or in the province. But I have heard from hundreds of people in Nepean-Carleton, in Barrhaven, in Bells Corners, in Stittsville, in Manotick, in Metcalfe, who are tremendously concerned about the future of professional hockey, not just in our community but in our

province and in our country. What they have been asking for is tax fairness for the Ottawa Senators and for the Corel Centre.

I want to be very clear that I agree with Rod Bryden when he says, "No subsidies, no grants and no corporate welfare." That's why our government has serious concerns with the federal Liberal government's proposal to divert revenues from existing charities and to simply cut a cheque to this enterprise. We think that's the wrong way to go, to ask a charity to make do with less.

The policy with respect to allowing local municipalities to create a separate property tax class for arenas has one simple goal: to allow communities and municipalities to choose the level playing field option. The Ottawa Senators played their first few seasons at the Civic Centre. There, they paid no property taxes, either directly or through their rent. A separate tax class would simply put the Corel Centre on a level playing field with other arenas.

The problem I've got with the current tax structure is that it punishes those municipalities that opt for privately funded arenas, and it rewards municipalities that would choose to have the taxpayers pay for and build an arena, which I disagree with and would think is not the way to go. The idea of having a separate property tax class is an idea that I supported last spring during the provincial election campaign and I'm pleased to see that the government has moved forward with this issue.

I do want to comment on the issue that my colleague from Windsor-St Clair raised earlier. There was a bill passed on December 19, 1991, by the New Democratic Party, the same party which brings forward this resolution, called the City of Windsor Act that allowed Windsor to exempt a piece of land from property taxes. What was so special about that land? The exemption allowed the construction of a sports/exhibition centre. It would appear that the NDP supported that bill when it was passed and now are reluctant to allow that same opportunity in Ottawa-Carleton. This is the same government which fought tooth and nail the creation of the Corel Centre and almost cost our community the benefits of having a professional sports team, and also almost cost this government the tens of million of dollars in annual tax revenue that we get today from the Ottawa Senators and from the Corel Centre.

When it helps in Windsor, it's OK, but in eastern Ontario and Ottawa-Carleton it ain't fair.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Baird: I appreciate they don't want to hear these arguments. None of us would like to see unfair, excessive taxation cause us to lose professional hockey from Ottawa-Carleton, from the province of Ontario or from Canada. That's what this issue is all about: tax fairness.

1720

The member opposite from Windsor earlier spoke about the amount of tax revenue that comes in from the Ottawa Senators. In fact, the outrageous part is that if you were to take all the revenue from all the ticket sales, even

including from the playoffs, it wouldn't exceed the taxes these people pay. You can squeeze so hard you're going to actually bring in less money, and that's the obscenity of this whole issue. By unfairly and unduly taxing an enterprise in Ontario, when you squeeze too hard, you're actually going to get less juice out of it because people are not going to sit by and pay those excessive taxes.

I do think it's time the federal government began to act on this issue. For months and months the federal government blamed this government, blamed Ontario, blamed Mike Harris, blamed the Conservative government in Ontario for not addressing this issue, and said, "If they would only stand up and act, we could help save jobs and help save the tax revenue which comes from those jobs." But they didn't want to exercise any leadership. They didn't want to put anything meaningful and doable on the table. The sad part about it is, now that this government has acted, the federal government appears not to even want to exercise or demonstrate any follower-ship, which is truly regrettable.

I will say that I admire my colleagues in the New Democratic Party. They are taking a position against this. Reasonable people can disagree, and they do. I wish the federal Liberal government would come out and take a position on this issue, which they have not.

I say no to corporate welfare, I say no to grants and I say no to subsidies because I think it's the wrong way to go. I said that when the team was looking at coming to Ottawa-Carleton, when we faced the decision, did we want to fund a taxpayer-subsidized arena? I very strongly felt we shouldn't, and we didn't. But at the same time as not putting taxpayers' dollars into constructing an arena, let's not whack them, let's not tax excessively the Ottawa Senators for that choice.

I strongly disagree with this resolution. I support the Ottawa Senators, I support tax fairness and I will be voting against the resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate? The member for York West?

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): It is surely York West, Mr Speaker. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate my associate at the federal level, who was just elected yesterday, by the way, former councillor Judith Sgro. I'm delighted to share the riding of York West with my colleague Judith Sgro.

I would like to take a couple of minutes on a topic that I don't profess to be a specialist on, even though I like hockey very much and I love to take my grandchildren whenever I can afford some tickets. To address the topic at hand, I have to say that in no way does the resolution by the NDP address the question in itself. We are not giving sports facilities or operators any money whatsoever. The government in power in Ontario here is very dextrous, if I may say. They have come up with a device to say: "Yes, we support you, but we're not going to give you any money. We'll let the local municipality decide." In fact, this is what they are doing with this particular piece of legislation, and I have to say to the mover of the resolution that we are not giving any money away. What

the government has been doing is to twist things around a bit, if you will, and say: "Let's say yes. Let's be sympathetic but let's give the local municipality the option if they want to do it or not." I think that's where the crux of the question—

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: Absolutely. That's where the truth of the matter lies. I believe now that it will be up to the local municipalities in the Ottawa area to rally around the Ottawa Senators and give support to that particular organization, which, in total, I'm not against. Because if you look from an outside point of view and say, "Let's give them some money outright," you may say, "No, I don't favour that." I think we have to look at the surrounding area of all the hockey associations and what they do and what they provide to the local community.

Let me say that the municipal option is one way of providing that assistance. In many cases, when we have entities like that, they provide a number of local improvements for the immediate community and the immediate vicinity. Normally, organizations like that provide a number of excellent activities and programs for our youth, our kids—and families as well—who love hockey and participate in that particular sport.

What I'm most interested in is the fact that a number of small businesses do benefit from having such an organization centralized in a big city like Ottawa. Therefore, apart from the other benefits—tax relief and stuff like that—I think the community benefits a lot more than some of the revenues that may be written off.

I also have to say that having such an entity in an area like Ottawa would encourage other small businesses to establish in the same general area. We have hotels and whatever—restaurants, all kinds of sports stores and other facilities. If we were to have more of those, we would be getting more business dollars as revenue. If we don't have those facilities and we have empty stores, we won't be getting any business or tax revenues.

I think I am done with the five or six minutes which my colleague kindly allotted to me. In support of the member for Ottawa Centre, I will just reiterate the comments he made. I thank you for the time given to me.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise in opposition to this motion. First of all, I'll tell you that my voice sounds a bit rough. It's due to cheering another great sporting event last Sunday: the Tiger Cats thumping the Argos once again—and they're on their way to repeating that in Montreal, I'm sure, on Sunday. Hopefully I'll have my voice back so I can cheer loudly there as well, and on the way to the Grey Cup the week after. Certainly I don't feel any regrets about having a voice like this after the Tiger Cats won the game.

There was a simple solution to this thing a few years ago. At that time the NHL could have done the right thing. The NHL had the choice of awarding the franchise to Hamilton or to Ottawa. I don't blame the Ottawa Senators. They did a great job. They put together a great bid and got the franchise. But had the NHL at that time done what I believe would have been the right thing, the

franchise would have been awarded to Hamilton and this issue wouldn't be here, because we have the municipally owned Copps Coliseum that is obviously exempt from paying taxes. But it goes to this argument as well: that is, support of a hockey franchise or a hockey arena in the same way. That was paid by taxpayers of all levels of government at that time, primarily to get Hamilton to build Copps Coliseum.

The issue in front of us is not simply as it has been put in the motion or has been talked about: the subsidizing of very well paid professional hockey players. This is in many ways about a business operation. I'm surprised that the NDP would put this forward, because I know when they were in government, as has been said before, many times the right thing was to help businesses that were having difficulties. Whether it was through some sort of bailout package, whether it was some sort of incentive, some type of break, that was part of the thing. We all understand that. We understand it's a lot easier to keep 500 or 1,000 jobs in this province, rather than trying to find a way of bringing in an additional 500 or 1,000 jobs from elsewhere. It's a lot easier, and the NDP seemed to understand that when they were in government. There were a number of examples given earlier by my colleagues, where a number of corporations were in trouble and at risk of losing a lot of jobs. The government did the right thing in trying to help them out. Even today, since they've been in opposition, there have been a number of times where corporations have been in trouble, they've been struggling, some have closed and they have urged the government to step in and help out in those situations.

Interjection.

1730

Mr Agostino: As my colleague rightly says, this government has not acted on that front. I hope this will give the government some type of incentive to look at other situations as they arise as well, beyond simply what is in front of us.

What we're talking about here are 1,200 or so jobs directly associated with this club in the Ottawa area. Yes, there's a roster of 24 well-paid hockey players, and people can gripe about how much money they make and how overpaid professional athletes are. The reality is that's the market we're competing in. They're extremely talented and gifted people who play that game and can perform at that level, and if they can get that money, I guess that's the market we're dealing with both in Canada and the United States, when it comes to professional sports. That's the reality. But if it wasn't for those 24 well-paid players who are on that team, the other jobs wouldn't be there, the Corel Centre wouldn't be there, the spinoff effects wouldn't be there.

This is important to the Ottawa area, obviously, but I believe in the bigger picture it's also important to the country as a whole. With the loss of the other franchises that we had in this country—the Quebec Nordiques as one, and the Winnipeg Jets—I think we've lost part of our heritage, part of our culture as a country. Yes, it's a business; yes, it's a sport; yes, people are into making

money. We understand that. It's also a great source of entertainment for people, it's a great source of national pride, not only for that area but for the country as a whole.

I don't particularly happen to be a fan of the Ottawa Senators; I happen to like another hockey team. But once my team gets beaten out of the playoffs, which happens regularly, then I look to Canadian teams and I sort of get involved in the sense of saying, "Hey, it would be great if a Canadian team could win the cup or advance to the finals."

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: Definitely not the Sabres, because they shafted us out of the franchise in the first place.

This really does give the tools to the Ottawa area and to the region and to the local taxpayers to make the decisions that are necessary in order to keep this. It's a question of whether they can compete, as you do in the private sector, not only in Canada but in the United States. Out of the 20 US-based NHL teams, 13 pay absolutely no property or capital taxes, while three of them pay minimal taxes. So 16 out of 20 teams in the United States pay few or no property taxes for their facilities. That puts our teams at a distinct disadvantage, and it makes it much more difficult.

One can say, "They're going to put a gun to our head again; they're going to come back." The reality is this: We can talk about what it may cost from the point of view of the taxpayers in the Ottawa region with the possibility that this adjustment is made, but one must ask, what would it cost the taxpayers of Ottawa and the taxpayers of Ontario if the team did leave?

I believe Mr Bryden is not in this thing to get more money; he's not bluffing. I believe he has a very serious, difficult situation on his hands. They've got a great hockey team. They sell out; they do very well. They're still losing a significant amount of money, in the realm of about \$10 million a year. That is the reality. We can say, "Well, it's great," but you know what? Mr Bryden can take this team and get almost any major American city that's looking for a franchise to go in and build an arena for them, move the team and probably make a hell of a lot more money there, or sell it somewhere else in the States, or someone else in the States will buy this team. That's been the sort of practice we've seen with the NFL franchises. Teams are tripping over each other, talking about figures of \$750 million to buy an NFL franchise, and cities are willing at a moment's notice to build football stadiums that hold 80,000 or 100,000 to attract that.

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: The leader of the NDP keeps talking about this again. I understand that you have a problem with people making money. That's the tradition of your party; that's the tradition of the NDP. I wish the NDP would show some consistency, as they did when they were in government. When they were in government they believed it was OK for the government to get involved, to try to help corporations that were having difficulties or losing jobs. That was OK then. Now they're playing by

different standards because somehow they don't think of the other 1,200 people who lose their jobs when this team moves. They keep talking about the 20 or 24 high-paid professional hockey players who go with that club. They don't realize that's the reason why those other jobs are there.

It's easy to always beat up on people who are perceived to be making a lot of money, and these hockey players are. There's no question, these hockey players are making a lot of money. Nobody would argue with that. But they also have that talent. Also realize that most of these players are spending eight or nine months of the year minimum in Ottawa—some of them year round, but most of them eight or nine months of the year. They spend their money here. They pay their taxes. That is the reality of it.

Again, I understand that the NDP likes to put its blinders on and be parochial. It's OK for Windsor, because an NDP member is in Windsor. It was OK then. I realize that's what it's all about. It's a party that has no vision. It's a party that has blinders on. It's a party that simply figures: "You know what? It doesn't affect our own backyard. We'll just let it go." It was OK time after time, even with this government in power, where industries have folded, where the leader of the NDP or other members have stood up and said: "You've got to help. You've got to give some money here. There are 1,000 jobs on the line. You've got to step in." It's a selective principle I guess that we're talking about here. There are no more guarantees here than there were when you tried to bail out companies when you were in government. Those companies were as good as the next time they left the country.

The reality is this: What we have in front of us is good for the city of Ottawa. This is good for the province. It's good for Canada as a whole. I believe it is extremely important to our country for this franchise to survive. I understand that the NDP would love nothing better than to see the Ottawa Senators fold and possibly the Maple Leafs can follow and maybe the Canadiens can go and so on. I understand that the NDP has a problem with professional teams, professional sports.

Government sometimes has to make some decisions. I don't often agree with decisions made across the floor. As I said earlier, I actually hope that we will also look at situations, I say to the government, where companies that are struggling or companies that need some help from government come to us to save some jobs and we'll find some way. I'm not necessarily saying to pump money into it, but we can find some way of doing this.

I find it amazing that the NDP and the leader of the party, who have pretended in the past to be on the side of working people, are willing to say to those 1,200 workers in Ottawa, "The hell with you." You know why? Because players make \$7 million a year, the NDP, Howard Hampton and the rest of that gang, thinks it's OK to simply throw those 1,200 jobs out the window. Those people don't matter. Maybe it's because they're not

unionized; I'm not sure. But those people don't matter. That is their reality.

We believe that those 1,200 jobs are important. We believe those 1,200 people in Ottawa who are working related to the Ottawa Senators are important. We believe that the spinoff effects to the Ottawa area are important. We believe the survival of that franchise is important to Ottawa and it's important to our country and to our province and to our heritage and to our pride here. I know that's something the NDP doesn't believe in; I understand that. They have a track record and a history of their selective principles that they're showing here again today.

It's the right thing to do. We support this government in helping the Ottawa Senators, trying to get them out of a difficult situation. We certainly do not support the motion in front of us. Let's do the right thing here today. It doesn't matter what members come from where. The NDP should understand that it's good to help businesses not only in areas that elect NDPers but right across the province, from one end to the other.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I just want to be sure that the Conservatives have concluded their speaking time and the Liberals have concluded their speaking time.

The Acting Speaker: The government caucus has 16 seconds left.

Leader of the third party.

1740

Mr Hampton: I'm pleased to be able to use this time. I want everyone to know precisely what we are debating. The government has tried to confuse this. The government has come forward with a proposal to give tax breaks in effect to professional sports enterprises and we, as New Democrats, think this is fundamentally wrong. For example, the National Hockey League is a very profitable operation. The National Hockey League and its franchises do not need tax breaks from the taxpayers of Ontario.

The government has tried every which way it can to disguise this, but at the end of the day what it amounts to is this: They're going to give special property tax breaks to NHL franchises, and other taxpayers in the province will have to pick that up in one way or another, or public necessities such as health care, education and important community services will have to be cut yet more in order to give millionaire NHL franchises a tax subsidy. That is the long and the short of it. The government can dip and dodge and twist and turn; that's what it boils down to.

I have to say I've enjoyed this debate today. I've enjoyed watching the Conservatives twist and turn and try to deny that they're giving corporate welfare to an operation that's very wealthy. I've enjoyed it even more to watch Liberals twist and turn and justify this incredible corporate welfare scam.

Let me go through some of the things that have been offered up. First, when the government offered up this proposal, they tried to say that this is like the Windsor

Casino. I challenge anyone to look at the Windsor Casino. There were no property tax breaks, no tax breaks of any kind for the Windsor Casino.

Then there was a private member's bill. A private member put forward a proposal to the House that if an arena were built in Windsor, an arena that would be publicly owned—it might be built by a private builder but in the end it was going to be publicly owned—the builder would be able to capture a revenue stream sufficient to capture their costs, but it would revert to the public. They're trying to use that as a justification.

This is not about building a new public facility, this is not about ensuring that public facilities are going to continue to be viable; this is about nothing more, nothing less than subsidizing a National Hockey League franchise. End of story. Liberals can create whatever kind of smokescreen they want to try to cover that fact up; that's what it is. It's not about building another public arena, it's not about building something that kids can enjoy; it's about subsidizing millionaire NHL franchises.

Then the smokescreen is offered up that it's about competitiveness. This is not about competitiveness. This is not about somehow having a situation where people are going to be placed on equal footing. If you examine the operations of the NHL over the last 20 years, that's exactly what hasn't happened. If you look at virtually every NHL franchise, whether they've operated in Canada or the United States, they consistently go back to taxpayers and ask for more subsidies. They consistently ask the taxpayers of the state or the city or the province or the country for more tax subsidies. That is not about competitiveness. That is, pure and simple, good old corporate welfareism. It's about asking hard-pressed taxpayers to subsidize people who are already well off. We say "Nonsense" to that. Don't try to disguise it as competitiveness. It is pure and simple corporate welfare.

I say Liberals ought to be ashamed. Liberals want to say, "When the NDP was in government, you restructured Algoma Steel." Yes, Algoma Steel was restructured. There were no taxpayer subsidies. The workers at Algoma Steel took equity in the company. They took a pay cut in order that they could survive. I don't see any Ottawa Senators, who are making \$3-million and \$4-million salaries, lining up and saying that they will take a pay cut in order that the franchise can survive. In fact, the highest-paid player wants his contract renegotiated. He wants another \$2 million out of taxpayers' pockets.

There were no subsidies at Provincial Papers. The workers in that mill took a cut in pay in order that that company could survive. They then successfully repositioned it. It's a profitable company now. There was no taxpayer subsidy.

Spruce Falls, St Marys: there were no taxpayer subsidies.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Tell us about OBI.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Transportation wants to know about OBI. OBI was simply a place where the government was able to use its capacity to get guaranteed

orders for the production of those buses. If the Minister of Transportation wants to say that OBI shouldn't be around today, if that's the position of the present Minister of Transportation, then you stand in your place and you say that.

I wanted to cut through some of the nonsense that has been spouted here today by Liberals and Conservatives to justify this incredible scam of corporate welfarism. I want to get right to the bottom of what's going on here. Ontario does not have a problem. This is not a public problem. This is not a taxpayer's problem. This is a problem for the National Hockey League. The National Hockey League is a very wealthy entity. The National Hockey League has to decide if it wants to have franchises in Canada. If it wants to have franchises in Canada, it has to sit down and it has to put together a revenue-sharing formula which will allow for franchises in Canada to continue.

Let me give you the exactly comparable situation. In the National Football League you have a franchise in Green Bay, Wisconsin, population 200,000, a very small market, just as Ottawa is a small market, Edmonton is a small market, Calgary is a small market and Quebec is a small market. What does the National Football League do to ensure that you don't simply have five or six very wealthy teams and then a whole lot of other franchises that are going out of business? The National Football League put together a revenue-sharing formula. Each team in the league contributes so much of its revenue into a revenue pot and then at the end of the year that money is shared up to ensure that teams like Green Bay, which has a proud heritage in football, which has won the National Football League, the Super Bowl several times, that that franchise is allowed to continue.

The National Football League has come together and made a decision that they want the small market teams as well as the large market teams to continue to succeed. There is absolutely nothing stopping the National Hockey League from doing the same thing. But, no, the National Hockey League doesn't do that. What the National Hockey League engages in is a process where they go from community to community, each seeking a bigger corporate rip-off scheme. That's what's going on.

Let me point out the example of Winnipeg. The Winnipeg Jets used to be my favourite team. I used to go watch the Jets a lot. The Jets first went to the city of Winnipeg and said: "We need a \$2-million subsidy." Winnipeg provided it. Then they came back and said: "We need a \$20-million subsidy." Winnipeg provided it. Then they came back in the last year and said, "We need a \$50-million subsidy and if you don't give it to us, we're leaving town." Winnipeg gave them the \$50-million subsidy. Do you know what they did the next year? They went to Phoenix. They used to be called the Winnipeg Jets; they're now the Phoenix Coyotes. Do you know what they're saying in Phoenix now? "Taxpayers, build us a \$200-million arena or we're going to leave Phoenix."

This, by any measure, is disgusting behaviour, and yet I'm hearing Conservatives and Liberals in this House saying that they condone that behaviour, they approve of that behaviour, they're going to be party to that behaviour. By any measure, this is nonsense. This is absolute nonsense.

As I said earlier, this is not a public problem. This is not a taxpayer problem. If the NHL believes that it's important to have NHL franchises in Canada—and I think it would be important for the future of the NHL to do that—they should sit down, they should negotiate a revenue-sharing strategy, they should do something about the fact that NHL teams in Ontario, Canada, take in their money in Canadian funds and pay out their salaries in American funds. In other words, they lose 50 cents on each dollar. That's something for the NHL to deal with. If I may suggest, they should follow the lead of the National Football League, because if a team like the Green Bay Packers can continue to exist—nay, prosper—and be successful in the National Football League, there's an example there for the NHL.

Finally, the Liberals have offered up the argument that this is about jobs that would disappear. I want to quote from a Liberal-appointed senator, Senator Frank Mahovlich, a Hockey Hall of Famer who said this week about subsidizing NHL hockey teams with taxpayers' money: "It would be like pouring money into a black hole."

Frank Mahovlich says: "The NHL has some structural problems and they have to resolve those. If we gave them money it would just disappear. All the agents would line up and they'd tell the teams they have all that government money to pay their players, so hand it over." That's Frank Mahovlich, Liberal-appointed Senator, pointing out the fallaciousness of that argument.

You don't have to believe Frank; you can go talk to some economists, and let me give you some examples from some economists. Robert Beade of Lake Forest University studied 48 US cities—36 with professional sports teams and 12 without—and found that the presence of professional sport is not statistically significant in determining economic growth rates; it has no effect. Professor Michael Walden of North Carolina State University looked at 46 major urban centres in the United States. He found that those with major league teams grew more slowly than those without. Do you want to know why? Because a lot of good public money was being siphoned off into supporting professional franchises that don't need or deserve support.

We would be better to spend the money on health care, on education, on the community necessities. That's where the real jobs lie. Tell the NHL millionaires to get their own house in order.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Christopherson has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. It will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker: Will all those in favour of the motion please stand to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Hampton, Howard	Marchese, Rosario
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Martel, Shelley
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Martin, Tony

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand one at a time.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Hastings, John	Patten, Richard
Arnott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Sergio, Mario
Barrett, Toby	Johns, Helen	Skarica, Toni
Bountrogianni, Marie	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
Boyer, Claudette	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.

Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Mazzilli, Frank	Tilson, David
Dunlop, Garfield	McLeod, Lyn	Tumbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Eves, Ernie L.	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Palladini, Al	Young, David
Gill, Raminder		

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 9; the nays are 46.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

This House will stand adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1804.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre de l'Environnement, ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguee aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Dan (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Thunder Bay- Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing- Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Brenda Elliott, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Sean G. Conway, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, John R. O'Toole,
R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
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Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Monte Kwinter, Tina R. Molinari,
Gerry Phillips, Toni Skarica
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczkowski

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Bert Johnson,
Morley Kells, Tony Martin, George Smitherman,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Brad Clark
Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Pat Hoy,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry J. Ouellette, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N.
Tascona, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, John Hastings,
Shelley Martel, Bart Maves, Julia Munro,
Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Frances Lankin,
Tony Ruprecht, David Young
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 16 November 1999

Mardi 16 novembre 1999



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 novembre 1999

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE STREETS ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 15, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways / *Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la sécurité en Ontario en interdisant la sollicitation agressive, la sollicitation de personnes dans certains lieux et le rejet de choses dangereuses dans certains lieux, et modifiant le Code de la route afin de réglementer certaines activités sur la chaussée.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): To resume debate, member from Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Thank you, Speaker, and thanks for remembering the name of the riding. I still think of it as Welland-Thorold. As a matter of fact, I was thinking about Welland-Thorold and Pelham and south St Catharines when I was here last night because, as you know, this bill was debated until 6 pm, and then at 6:30 debate was not resumed on this bill, but was resumed on another bill.

Of course we're talking about what is known colloquially as the government's squeegee bill. It's a bill that's going to put squeegee kids in jail. When I say it made me think of Welland-Thorold, Pelham, south St Catharines, it's because over the course of last week when we had our fall break or winter break through to Monday, I had an opportunity in a number of venues to talk to people from Niagara Centre, and not one asked me or instructed me to support this legislation. Not one of them, as a matter of fact, even raised the matter.

Heck, Friday I was over at Gallaher paper mill in Thorold, which the workers have been occupying for 26 days because the main creditor, TD Bank, was encouraging the receiver, Ernst and Young, to sell it off as mere inventory, to liquidate it, which would have meant the loss of 310 jobs in Thorold. Thorold's a small town, small-town Ontario. It's like most of Ontario; it's small-

town Ontario. It's not Toronto, it's not Ottawa, it's not London. Those workers had been in there for 26 days and finally, as a result of their hard work, as a result of their commitment, Ernst and Young, the receiver, was able to bring parties together and it was announced that there was going to be a sale of the plant to a purchaser who was going to keep the plant operating.

That was a day of celebration, let me tell you. Maybe it was because so much attention was focused on having saved Gallaher paper, maybe it was because of the excitement over that that folks never mentioned this bill to me, but I tell you, there were several hundred family members, members of the community, community leaders out there who didn't mention the squeegee bill legislation.

Throughout the weekend I was at a number of events. Heck, Saturday night I was at a dinner at the Hungarian Hall for the 85th anniversary of All Peoples' United Church. Again, several hundred people, and I tried to say hello to them, of course, stopping table to table, and not a single one mentioned the squeegee bill. Sunday morning I was at the same church, All Peoples' United Church, for their 85th anniversary service. We had a chance to chat afterwards, and nobody raised this bill as an issue. So forgive me if I have erroneously reached the conclusion or drawn the inference that there is no great mass movement advocating for this legislation, but that's my impression. I want to be candid.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Maybe you were in the wrong church.

Mr Kormos: He says I've been to the wrong church. No, All Peoples' United Church is a good church with good people. I've been in many churches. I was over at the Hungarian Greek Catholic church a couple of weekends ago. I was at the 50th anniversary of Faith Tabernacle. They've got a huge church in Welland, thousands of members of the congregation there, and not one of them said a word about the bill.

I may be wrong, because even when I reflect back on when the government first raised this as an initiative, when the government first announced that they were going to get tough on squeegee kids, I do tell you that I received but one comment from one resident of my riding, because she had seen me speaking somewhere on the issue and belittling the proposition. I asked her: "Are you sure I was belittling it? Is that a fair assessment of what I was doing?" She assured me that from what she saw, I was belittling it. I am sure she was probably right; I probably was belittling it. But then I said to her: "Look,

fair enough. You want to put squeegee kids in jail and you want police officers' attention diverted to squeegee kids." We didn't know about the rest of the bill then. "Wouldn't you really rather have police officers out there solving real crimes, crimes where people are victimized, crimes where people's homes are broken into, crimes where senior citizens are being ripped off either by fraud and phone fraud or by people snatching their purses as they are leaving the supermarket?"

The woman reflected. She doesn't live in Toronto. She apparently had been confronted by squeegee kids while leaving Toronto, Spadina Avenue or University Avenue, one or the other, and found it an unsettling experience, but she also acknowledged that she had never seen that phenomenon before, and fair enough.

Once again, I'm prepared to concede that for some people, not for me but for some people, squeegee kids at the intersection may be annoying, but I'll repeat and I'll say what I did last night: You can't criminalize behaviour merely because it's annoying. Like I said last night, I find the Canadian Home Shopping Channel very annoying, but I would never in a million years suggest outlawing that. I'm sure people here find me annoying and they may wish that there were legislation that would deal with me, but nobody would raise that with any seriousness.

I'll tell you what's annoying. I almost hit a pedestrian on University Avenue a couple of weeks ago. It was a Bay Street stockbroker guy in his blue suit rushing across the road trying to get at the exchange to put in an order before the bell rang. Darn near hit the guy. I had to slam on the brakes. I thought: "My God, why isn't there a law against this? Why isn't there a law against stockbrokers dashing across the street just so they can get to the market, to the exchange, before the last-minute bell?" I think it had something to do with diminishing stock prices in one of the airlines. I'm not sure. The guy was a little rattled, but heck, no more rattled than I was. I was worried. My Chevy pickup has got enough dings and dents on it already. The last thing I need is blue serge, the wool from a stockbroker's jacket, imbedded into the front grille. I find that very annoying, but I'm not about to introduce a private member's bill saying, "Ban people from running across the road to get to the stock market in a hurry."

As I said last night, this deals with essentially three parts: (1) with the squeegee kids; (2) with what this government calls aggressive panhandling; and (3) with the syringes and condoms and broken glass on the streets or in alleyways, or possibly in playgrounds or parks.

I've explained several times now, trying to just put this in the proper perspective, that squeegee—these are kids who are trying to hustle a few bucks. I'm sure the reasons for wanting to hustle a few bucks are as varied as the young people out there doing this. The argument that some of these kids have homes I'm sure is right; I'm sure some of them do have homes. But I'm also sure that most of them are living under very difficult conditions. They are out there trying to make a couple of bucks.

Let's put it in perspective. When I was a kid, and a whole lot of other kids from Crowland, we used to make up shoeshine boxes, nail them together ourselves—they weren't the most precise things in the world—and when the guys were leaving the Kingsley Hotel or the Dexter on a Saturday afternoon, leaving the men's beverage room, as it was then, we'd hit them up for a shoeshine. Quite frankly, I'm sure that our shoeshines weren't particularly efficient; we weren't the most competent shoeshine youngsters in the world. I'm sure it was considered annoying by more than a few of the gentlemen leaving the Dexter Hotel, the Kingsley, the Rex, or the Reeta as they were confronted by a kid saying, "Shoeshine?" We used to hound them. If you got somebody who you figured was a fairly decent catch, you'd chase after him: "Mister, mister, you sure you don't want your shoes shined?" We'd start at 25 cents and, "Look, I'll do it for a dime." Were we annoying? Of course we were. But were we criminals? I think not. We were kids trying to hustle a few bucks, 25 cents or 10 cents or 15 cents at a time, by shining shoes.

The other thing that concerns me about this whole approach to deciding who's worthy of being on the streets and who isn't causes me to reflect back to the days when I practised law. I used to be amazed when I had accused, for instance, with cheques that bounced, NSF cheques. It soon struck me that there was a distinction being made. From time to time, I've written an NSF cheque. I have; I confess. Inevitably when that happens, George's Hardware will phone me up and say, almost embarrassed, "Pete, gosh, your cheque came back NSF." He'd apologize for calling me about it. I'd say: "Please, don't you apologize. I wrote you a bad cheque. I'll be right down there."

But, you see, somebody who isn't middle-aged and middle-class, somebody who is perhaps poor—we have a lot of poor people in our society—or a single mother, if they write an NSF cheque, the owner of that store, the Loblaws or the Zehrs, or the owner of George's Hardware, more often than not doesn't bother calling that person at their home and saying, "Look, you left us an NSF cheque"; they call the police. They've criminalized that behaviour. It's strange that some behaviour is criminalized—the very same behaviour, for all intents and purposes—for one sector of the population, and is non-criminal for another.

We've raised this in the House. The Attorney General has responded with some candour in a variety of ways.

We've talked about how this bill could impact firefighters who on Labour Day weekend, September 1, go out there and raise money as part of an international phenomenon of raising money for treatment programs for kids. What they do in Wellington, and I'm sure they do across the province in a similar way, at least in small-town Ontario, is firefighters will stand right at the intersection. They are out there to lean on you a little bit. There's nothing subtle about their pitch. They've got the bucket. They'll lean on you to throw a couple of loonies

or a toonie or a five-dollar bill into the bucket, and you get a little token indicating that you've already paid once.

Again, I don't object to that. It's neither unsafe nor is it annoying from my point of view. But I've also seen, for whatever reason—in their minds I wouldn't want to go—people who would roll their window up and say, "Go away," to the same persons out there doing volunteer work, trying to raise some money for some serious treatment and research programs.

1900

The Attorney General has conceded that that kind of behaviour could conceivably—it's a matter of fact, on the roadway—fall within the scope of this legislation. Earlier today the Premier said—if it wasn't the Premier, it was another one of his ministers in response to a question—we've got to rely upon the discretion of our police. Why don't you just say so in the bill? At the very least, exempt charitable organizations, which are out there actively fundraising. Exempt them from coverage under the bill, please. They deserve that much.

So, you see, it's a matter of soliciting money. There are some nice, neat, legal, middle-class ways of doing it, and then there are some less-sophisticated, perhaps cruder, poor-kid ways of doing it. Who gets targeted? Who's in the scopes? It's the poor kid. I don't think this government or any other government has the prerogative, even by virtue of being in a majority position, to criminalize what is merely annoying behaviour.

I took a look, of course, at the list of things which were deemed to be aggressive, an aggressive manner. One of the things the bill says is, "Thou shalt not beg at an ATM," a bank machine. I've got to confess, I've seen panhandlers around those machines. I've seen them there, approaching and panhandling the people who are going to or leaving the machines. If you ask them why they go to the area of those ATMs, I suspect there are two reasons: one is because those ATMs, if they can sneak in, can provide a reasonably warm, safe place for homeless people to sleep during the night, and I acknowledge they do that.

Is it a comfortable scenario for a pedestrian or another passerby to walk into their ATM and see a homeless person sleeping there? I would feel very uncomfortable, and I have felt uncomfortable, but more so for the person who's compelled to sleep under those conditions and doesn't have a roof to put over their head.

If you ask a panhandler why he or she goes to an ATM machine, it's the same as asking Bonnie and Clyde, "Why do you rob banks?" Their response was, "Because that's where the money is." Why do you panhandle around an ATM? Because that's where the money is.

I should mention this. If that's to be deemed aggressive panhandling, I would feel far safer in a context where there are lights, probably a security camera and other people around if I'm confronted by a stranger, be it a panhandler or not, than I would on some quiet, dark personless street where there are no pedestrians travelling back and forth.

I hear what the government is saying, but it's just that my perspective is the complete opposite. If I'm going to be panhandled, please let me be panhandled in a place with lighting and with security cameras. Think about it. The last place I want to be approached or anybody wants to be approached by a stranger is on a lonely, dark street where other people aren't around. Quite frankly, if you're going to get mugged, you're more likely to get mugged on the lonely, dark street than you are at the ATM.

You talk about people who are waiting for buses or waiting for a taxi, I presume. Once again, you're in a place where there are other people around, people waiting to use a pay phone. There are other people around. That's the safest you're going to get in terms of being confronted by a stranger in any city, big or small.

Let me talk about aggressive panhandling in terms of being persistent. All of this assembly has occasion to be out on the streets of Toronto from time to time, and we've all been panhandled. I'm sure of that. From my point of view, there's nothing more upsetting than the lethargic panhandler who merely sits there silently with their hand out. We've all seen that sort of person. That person is perhaps among the most pitiful, because they don't have well-honed panhandling skills. At the end of the day, I'm certainly far more moved by a panhandler who has a line. You've seen the signs, "Help me for my down payment on the condominium," stuff like that. Those sorts of marketing techniques—and they are—quite frankly are far more conducive to more generosity on the part of the patron than the limp, lethargic panhandler, who again is far more pitiful, because clearly that's a person who has lost a whole lot of hope and a whole lot of sense of why they are where they are.

There is nothing in this legislation that's designed to protect poor people. There's nothing in the legislation that's designed to assist poor people in removing themselves from positions of poverty. As a matter of fact, there is nothing at all deficit-fighting about this bill. That's why in the context of this I want to make reference to an article I read in the National Post, November 10, 1999. It's an article about Donald Trump, who is a would-be or wannabe presidential aspirant in the United States. This guy is not a left-winger. This guy is not even a middle-of-the-roader. He's a pretty conservative guy.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Oh, he is, fascinating guy, multi-billionaire, who has thrust himself on to the political scene in the United States and, at least at this point, purports to be considering running for the Reform Party of the United States, the Ross Perot party. Here's Donald Trump, and do you know what he says about the American debt and deficit? You'll find this interesting.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): It doesn't matter, we're going to hear it anyway.

Mr Kormos: You bet your boots you are. Here's Donald Trump, who has a solution to the American debt. He's a very wealthy man, and he says we should impose a one-time only wealth tax on America's very wealthy, a 14.25% tax on the net worth of any individual or trust

that exceeds \$10 million. There is nothing in the article to confirm the figures, but Donald Trump insists that would raise the trillions of dollars necessary to literally eliminate the American debt, which is huge. If Canadian debt is enormous, American debt is huge, huge, huge. He indicates a one-time only tax. He indicates that he'd be prepared to pay his fair share of that. There's some logic to it. He doesn't want to make poor people pay off the deficit of the United States or reduce it or pay off the debt; he wants the people who have benefited most from that debt and deficit, the richest people in the United States, to pay it off.

I think it would be interesting to put this into a Canadian context of enormous wealth and see what would be required to eliminate Canadian deficit and debt. I suspect that the figures would be very similar to the American figures. I'm not sure of that, but I suspect they would.

I would like government speakers to this bill, and I'm sure there are going to be some, to speak about what this bill means to their folks in their own communities, because, as a matter of fact, most of the Toronto members are non-government members. I'm not sure if that's necessarily the case, but most are. I would like to hear from government members as to how their communities, their constituencies, respond to this proposition, to this effort to ban squeegee kids. I would also like government members, if they can, to provide us with petitions signed by people who insist upon this legislation. That is not to say that all legislation has to be prompted merely by petitions or by a groundswell of public opinion, it's not to suggest that at all.

Yesterday I talked about the magnitude of the consequences here. This legislation permits the courts to put people in jail, granted, not on a first offence. Do we really want to jail squeegee kids, especially when we know that the biggest bulk of squeegee kids who do get busted if the arrests and the prosecutions are successful, aren't going to be able to pay the fines because they're poor in the first place? Most of those arrested are going to have to go to jail not because it's their second or third offence, but because they don't have the money to pay the fine. Is that what we really want to do? Are we really that concerned, rather than, for instance, using the Highway Traffic Act as it exists now? Because there are a number of sections, as I understand them, in the Highway Traffic Act that would permit the police to prevent obstruction of traffic, if indeed that's what is happening, by squeegee kids or anybody else.

1910

We've been told that the chiefs of police of Ontario endorse this bill. I believe we've been told that, I'm not sure. But I would like government members to tell us what the rank-and-file police association members believe with respect to this bill, whether rank-and-file cops see that their time is well spent out there busting squeegee kids, because it requires surveillance. Perhaps we'll have undercover squeegee kids now and all the expense and person hours that that requires or that that demands. Maybe we'll have to have undercover squeegee

kids, cops who will put earrings in their ears and get some tattoos and maybe comb their hair up spiked and colour it weird and wonderful colours.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Blue.

Mr Kormos: Blue? Tory blue. Maybe that's what we're going to end up with. But the incredible expense, the incredible public expense that that type of police operation requires, are we convinced that that incredible expense outweighs or is proportional to the offence? I don't think we are.

The Police Association of Ontario was here at Queen's Park today. They were lobbying individual members, no two ways about it, and I respect them for that. God bless, they should be out there lobbying. One of the things we heard from the police association members, none of whom was from Niagara, but bordering on Niagara and similar types of communities, is that there is still a serious problem in terms of staffing of police departments, a very serious problem. Again, I'd like to hear from other members as to whether they got the same message from the Police Association of Ontario. One of their messages to us today in our caucus was that they need more staffing. They understand the thrice-told promise by the government of 1,000 new police officers. They also indicated how that in fact wasn't the effect, because it wasn't 1,000 net police officers, it wasn't 1,000 new police officers. As a matter of fact, many police services were using that funding to replace officers who had gone into retirement.

It seems that the police of this province are inclined to agree that we're understaffed in terms of policing, and that's without additional duties like busting squeegee kids. That's without having to stand at any number of street corners in the south end of Toronto and bust kids—because they're not going to have a driver's licence, more likely than not; they may not even have ID. So that means the police officer has to take them down to the station, is going to have to mark down whatever exhibits he or she obtains: the squeegee, the bucket. I don't know if they're going to keep the water in a freezer bag so they can indicate it was soap or detergent or what have you or Turtle car wax, I don't know. But that's going to be hours and hours of time for one bust. Talk to cops. They're frustrated already about the amount of time they have to spend doing notes and filling out reports for what at the end of the day are modest breaches of the law.

The cops I know in Niagara and the cops I know in other parts of the province are people who are out there doing their very best to enforce law and to protect citizens—their very best, with broken tools and very, very limited resources. The last thing they need is to be sent out on a blitz to bust squeegee kids.

You know what's happening down in Niagara region, like a few other regions across the province, where the Niagara regional police, like some other regional police forces, are being required to conduct option four speed traps. Are you aware of those? I am, let's put it this way, intimately aware of them.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): How much did it cost you, Peter?

Mr Kormos: I'll get right there. What they do is they set up a laser speed detector at a transition point from one miles-per-hour speed to a second, to a subsequent, and boom, they've got you. Everybody they catch is speeding, no two ways about it. You see, the option four is because the police officer says, "OK, you know about option one, two and three." That's plead guilty, plead not guilty, plead guilty with an explanation and so you get a fine reduced. The police officer says, "Oh, but you haven't heard of option four." Inevitably the recipient of that suggestion says: "Oh, option four? No, I haven't heard of it." Option four is when you go down to the local police station within two days, fill out a multiple choice test, which isn't marked or graded, mind you, doesn't even have your name on it, and you pay I think it was \$50 cash, exact change, no receipts.

Hon Mr Jackson: There's an implication there.

Mr Kormos: Oh, no. The Niagara Regional Police have raised hundreds of thousands beyond that. I believe the last report was well beyond mere hundreds of thousands.

Mr Jackson might find this interesting because Mr Jackson has been involved with the Ukrainian intern program here at Queen's Park. The first time that happened I had a young Ukrainian student with me. He had accompanied me to Welland and done some events and we'd done all sorts of things; visited the constituency office. I hope it was a good experience for him, as it was for the other Ukrainian interns. I think it's a good program.

As we were leaving Welland in the truck and he was telling me again about the breakdown of the old system in Ukraine—they're going through all the turmoil of developing a new economy, a new society—he suggested to me that from time to time in Ukraine, if cops stop you they want cash. It happens in any poor country. One of the reasons it happens in places like Mexico and a whole lot of places where police are more likely to accept cash—no receipts—is because of the extreme poverty they live in.

I was assuring this young man that doesn't happen in Canada. I said, "Look, over the course of decades there have been many criticisms of police officers, but police officers are not corrupt in the sense of being paid off." As a matter of fact, if you try to pay off a cop in Canada, you're likely to get busted big time and go to jail, which is not inappropriate.

Just as we were having this conversation—he speaks enough English; he spoke darn good English, as a matter of fact—and I was assuring him that doesn't happen in Canada, it's the waved-over, "Pull the truck into the Welland county fair grounds." The police officer knows me. I'm sure I know most of the police officers, except the young ones who have come on since I've stopped practising law. This young fellow was more than aware of what happened. He was sitting there and his jaw was dropping because, although he knows a lot of English, it isn't quite perfect. He may not have caught all the nuances. When we drove away from there he said: "What

do you mean it doesn't happen in Canada? What do you call what just happened?"

I had to explain to him that this is what police in Ontario are forced to resort to. They've got to be out there, and it does have a lot to do with fundraising. I've seen the memos, the directives from the inspector of a detachment to the commanding unit of that shift. The memoranda are very specific. They indicate we're going to have an option for laser out there today at such-and-such an intersection. The fact is, a speed trap like that costs a lot of money to maintain because you need three or four officers—somebody to be there to maintain security, somebody to pursue the cars that don't pull over when they get waved over—but it also has meant incredible revenues for Niagara and several other regional police forces across the province.

Some of the police who are doing it, mind you, have become addicted to the overtime, because the speed trap is so lucrative that it can pay overtime to police officers. But most of them would far sooner be out there preventing real crime. They'd far sooner be out there pursuing real criminals, people who have broken into somebody's house, people who have mugged and assaulted other people, people who steal cars and people who murder and do aggravated assaults and sexual assaults and rapes and that kind of mayhem.

Here we are, and by virtue of this bill you're effectively telling cops, "Go out there and spend Lord knows how many hours busting squeegee kids." Do you really think the first thing on a squeegee kid's mind—because you've read some of the reports, and I appreciate they're only anecdotal because there were newspaper reports and oftentimes real names weren't reported. You've read any number of reports from Montreal, and now Toronto, about squeegee kids getting tickets, but they don't pay the tickets. They don't pay the fines. They're out there on the street. They don't have enough money to pay a fine. A \$500 fine is a deterrent to somebody who has 500 bucks in their pocket and who's going to really miss it sadly when it goes.

Part of this bill is a reflection—it's almost literary—of a broken windows argument. I was at the conference of the crime control commissioners, all three of them with their long black trench coats belted up, their fedoras on to protect their heads from the cold, blustery winds of wherever their last junket was. I don't know. I went there very ready, very willing and interested in what was going to be proposed because there were a number of experts from across North America, especially some American experts.

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Mr Martiniuk, you may be able to help with this. The one from the Florida area, who had had an extreme amount of success with young offenders, I didn't mind his input at all. I enjoyed and appreciated the commentary he was making. Then there was another fellow who was interviewed by the press, a New York City person—this is the one we're talking about now, right?—who, when asked about Toronto's squeegee kids, said some-

thing to the effect of, "Oh my, yes, they're very polite, aren't they?" He'd never seen squeegee kids that polite.

In the United States they wanted to clean up, among other things, the Bowery down at the south end of Third Avenue, which is a totally different sort of scenario. In New York City it wasn't squeegeeing, because they didn't use squeegees. More often than not they used big, greasy rags and left your windshield in worse condition than it was when you got confronted by the window-washing person.

The other element—and please respond to this, if you will—about the broken windows theory is precisely that: broken windows. That is, if you've got an empty building and one windowpane gets broken and if you don't fix that properly, eventually that building will become a target for more and more vandalism. It will be spray-painted and more windows will be broken and then more windows will be broken and it'll be gutted. That's very different.

What this government is trying to do is relate the broken window theory to the squeegee kid phenomenon. But there has to be the premise, you see, that squeegee kids are first of all doing something illegal. This government is acknowledging, by virtue of this legislation, that what squeegee kids are doing now is not illegal; it's not a criminal or harmful activity. They purport to respond to it by making it illegal. You could do that about so many things. You could make any number of things illegal and then create all sorts of statistics about how successful you were in responding to it because you merely said it was illegal.

I don't think most Ontarians see squeegee kids as such a frightening or dangerous phenomenon. We've heard the arguments about how squeegee kids snap off windshield blades and scratch and key cars that are going past them, maybe the cars that don't give them anything, or maybe they holler obscenities at a driver. We haven't been made aware of a single arrest of any squeegee kid in this city, in this province. If there are records of that or demonstrations of it, please say so. But there's been no identification of a single instance where a squeegee kid is in fact convicted or even charged with a purely criminal offence. I agree; if you scratch somebody's car, that's a mischief charge. That's under the Criminal Code. If you break a windshield wiper, that's again a mischief charge. You convict that person under the Criminal Code.

The government tries to link squeegeeing with criminal behaviour, yet I haven't heard of any criminal behaviour on the part of squeegee kids. I haven't even seen a headline in the Sun that says, "Squeegee Kid Robs Bank," identified by his bucket in the right hand and a squeegee in the left and the four earrings in the left ear, or through the nose or God knows where else. I haven't seen a single news report, not even in the Toronto Sun, that says, "Squeegee Kid Crime Wave."

I know why Elliot Ness did it: because there were millions and millions of dollars of booze and gambling and prostitutes. That's why Elliot Ness did it. Why are you guys doing it? I understand the crime commissioners,

those long black jackets. I don't know, maybe they should issue you guys badges and you could say: "Hey, crime commissioner. Crime commissioner. Up against the wall, squeegee kid." Do you have those badges? I don't know. "Spread 'em, squeegee kid."

You guys watch too many 10 pm TV movies of the week. You guys are probably watching that Cops show on Fox TV perpetually. It couldn't come from anywhere else. Why don't you try Vision or Bravo or even the Learning Channel? Try the Learning Channel instead of Fox's Cops. Hell, you'd be further ahead watching Jerry Springer, and if you pass this legislation, some of you are going to end up on the Jerry Springer show. You're going to be asked to explain how a city like Toronto, one of the biggest cities in all of North America, with a handful of kids who provide the service of washing windows at an intersection during the red light—you're going to be on there because people are going to say, "You guys nuts?"

Let me put it in this perspective. I've always made this commentary: It costs me six bucks to walk to Queen's Park and five bucks to take a cab. I'm well aware that there are panhandlers out there. I had a woman in Welland tell me the other day that when she's in Toronto and is panhandled, she says, "Look, I'm privileged to be able to make a choice about whether or not I give that person a toonie or a loonie." This woman understands—a very kind woman, obviously—that there are some of us who are quite well off and there are others of us who aren't. It's as simple as that. I don't begrudge any of the people I might encounter walking here in the morning or walking home at night a loonie or a couple of quarters or whatever spare change I have left in my pocket. I don't begrudge them that.

It could happen to any number of us. It could, through any number of processes: mental illness, total family breakdown, drug or alcohol addictions. It really is a matter of, "There but for fortune go I." Don't think that we're so much smarter and better educated. Some of the people out there on the streets are extremely well educated, extremely bright, many of them are, but they've suffered misfortune that most of us, if not all of us, haven't yet. It really is a matter of, "There but for fortune go I."

What you've done is you've forced panhandlers into the most untenable positions, where they have to remain silent, where they can't engage in any contact with the pedestrian, where they can't have enough of a little kick to their pitch so that it makes it something worthwhile for both parties involved. You guys are going to create a far more disturbing type of panhandling than this city has ever witnessed. You are.

Don't think for a minute that this bill is going to either end squeegee kids or end panhandling, or for that matter end the phenomenon of people throwing broken glass, beer bottles, pop bottles into alleyways or into paved areas—or condoms or syringes.

I'll go back to where I was last night. The kind of person who throws a syringe into a public place isn't thinking about the Provincial Offences Act. You

understand, that person has just become blasted out of his mind with his or her hit of heroin or cocaine or crack or methamphetamine. The last thing they're thinking about is, "Oh, I better not put that syringe there; I just shot up my heroin" or cocaine or crack or what have you. Of course they aren't. Most of them don't shoot up in plain view of the public or witnesses, nor do they throw the syringe away in a manner or in a place where it could be observed by other people. Is it repugnant? It goes beyond repugnant to find syringes in public places where kids and other people could have access to them.

We've got to stop the phenomenon. I say you stop the phenomenon not by having a makeshift, do-nothing piece of legislation banning the throwing away or improper disposal of syringes, but you change the scenario by getting tough with drug traffickers and drug importation. That's how you deal with that phenomenon.

We just read in the press about the federal government making a major commitment to the RCMP, targeting certain areas, among them drugs. I'm not quick to praise the federal government, and they probably could have and should have done far more, but it's that very specific sort of concentrated effort that's going to start to address these problems, not creating a flimsy Provincial Offences Act. You've already read the news reports from lawyers saying: "I'm ready quick as a boo to challenge this as unconstitutional. Among other things, it would invade on some rights: freedom of expression etc." On the other hand, there probably would be some arguments indicating that it enters into what is solely federal Criminal Code jurisdiction.

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I mentioned to you last night how the extortion section of the Criminal Code is remarkably similar to the harassing or active or aggravating or aggressive soliciting, outlawing or banning soliciting in the places where the public is most safe. You're banning soliciting by way of panhandling. You're banning it in the places where the public is safest. That just again seems to me upside down, topsy-turvy, the wrong way to go about it.

Notwithstanding that you're banning panhandling, please talk to some of those panhandlers. Talk to some of those folks out there. I agree that for a whole lot of them panhandling isn't their sole source of income. Many of them are on disability pensions. Yet in the city of Toronto, notwithstanding a full disability pension, you're forced to go out there and panhandle. Many of them are suffering from conditions which leave them very marginalized, very ill-equipped to perform jobs, whatever jobs are available. Many of them have part-time jobs and with a minimum wage of \$6.85 an hour aren't able to rent even the crummiest—and try going to some of these rooming houses where these people are living. Try even entering and submitting yourself to the incredible conditions that we encounter.

Remember Dr Galt's bill last Thursday, which we all supported, about cruelty to animals. Let me tell you, doctor, there are good human beings living in conditions that we wouldn't let an animal live in here in this city,

here in this province. I was pleased to support your bill asking for reform with respect to animal abuse. But you notice that all of us, including you, were very careful to make it quite clear that we weren't somehow indicating the paramountcy of animal welfare over the welfare of anything or anybody else.

For God's sake, then, have enough regard for those poor, disenfranchised and marginal people out on our streets; have enough sympathy for them, as you clearly do for animals. Talk to some of those people out there on the street and you'll find as many reasons for them being there as there are people out there. You won't find any cushy lifestyles. You'll find desperate people who are living lifestyles that most of us couldn't even begin to imagine nor begin to contemplate enduring. As I say, there but for fortune go any of us, not necessarily in our youth, not necessarily now but perhaps in the future.

You're talking about cleaning up public parks and alleyways and places where the public go, on school grounds. Let's not just talk about, as we did, needing more aggressive drug enforcement and giving cops the resources to deal with drug trafficking and drug use. Let's talk about giving the municipality enough resources to get out there, like municipalities used to be able to afford to do, with workers doing real jobs, real work keeping those places clean. As I said before, I agree with you that to stumble across a used or any syringe is incredibly repugnant and dangerous and, I'll concur, so is a used condom and so is broken glass. You put it in your bill. Whether that was there for some poetry, to relate to the broken windows reference, I have no idea.

If you want to charge somebody for smashing glass in a public place, I suppose, if you really wanted to arrest that person and charge him with something, perhaps you should. If you wanted to make it an offence for people to dispose of any number of dangerous things in a public place where the public can have access to them, especially kids and so on, if you want to make that an offence, I suppose at the end of the day you probably could. What you've done here is, you've tried to deceive—no, I shouldn't say that. That wouldn't be fair. But you've tried to cloak this bill in some broader public safety statement, so you threw in the broken glass and the syringes and the condoms, when the real target or the first target is panhandlers and squeegee kids.

Panhandlers and squeegee kids, get used to it. How do you like it so far? Those are the manifestations of the defunding of any number of institutions. Those are the manifestations of the abolition of rent control. Those are the manifestations of a health care system that has been cut off at its knees. This bill will be accompanied by companion bills. I'm convinced that your enforced treatment bill, the community treatment plan, has far more to do with sweeping the streets than it has to do with real mental health treatment.

This is a new Parliament with a whole lot of newly elected people here, and most of you not from the Toronto area. I spoke to a cabinet minister a couple of years ago who indicated to me that he and his wife—I think it was his wife—were on Bloor Street and had

nk it was his wife—were on Bloor Street and had been confronted by a person who was very frightening for both of them, a person who—I'm convinced from the description—may well have suffered some sort of mental illness. My response to the cabinet minister, whom I've known for a good chunk of years, was: "My God, cabinet minister, you've been in Toronto long enough. Come on, you know as well as I do that mental health care institutions had disgorged their clientele, their patients many years ago. You know as well as I do that the vast, vast majority of these people don't pose any harm to people in the community," just like the vast number of panhandlers don't and the vast, vast—I'm convinced all of the squeegee kids don't pose any harm.

I'll mention it again. On a Thursday night in the middle of winter, when I head out of here with my windshield covered with salt and slush and coated up and I run out of the fluid in my reservoir, I want a squeegee kid at the end of University Avenue. I want a squeegee kid there before I get on to the Gardiner and the QEW, no two ways about it.

Mr Galt: And were they there?

Mr Kormos: They take care of me. I couldn't think of why they wouldn't take care of you, doctor. I couldn't think of why for a moment.

Mr Galt: On a cold, wet and snowy night.

Mr Kormos: It must be the vanity plates, doctor. They know who you are.

It would be so refreshing with this bill, if it goes into committee, and I'm insistent that it must, to have some Tory backbenchers stand up and be counted—quite clearly you disagree with the Liberals, I'm sure; we insist, not as often as the Liberals should but, fair enough, you disagree with us—to have a few backbenchers stand up and say: "This is hooey. This doesn't warrant serious consideration by a Parliament, the government of Ontario."

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Galt: It's always great to be in the House when the member from Niagara Centre speaks. It's entertaining. He's just a tremendous speaker. I enjoy it thoroughly. I also enjoy his twisted logic at times. It's kind of neat to hear how he walks through it. It's kind of fun, particularly when he talks about the undercover squeegee kids coming out to monitor what's going on. It's very kind of him to bring back to mind what we debated last week: the animal abuse resolution that I brought in. I recognize there are problems that people have with abuse, and to help remind him of some of the things we've been doing recently, I was just jotting down some things here to bring to mind for the member from Niagara Centre.

One of the things is that we've changed the funding for shelters for women. There's more stable funding, all under one roof of one government. We're fast-tracking the software programs for the CAS: We now have 51 of the 54 in place, and 1,000 new computers for the program. We've brought in LEAP, the learning, earning and parenting program, for 16- and 17-year-old teenagers

who are finding themselves parents and still want to continue their schooling to make something of themselves—some \$25 million. We brought in a breakfast program, a unique idea on the part of the Premier. We brought in the child reform bill, putting the best interests of the child first and foremost, rather than the general idea of family.

We are really leaders in prevention of violence and helping victims here in Ontario. We've put \$100 million into the prevention of violence against women, and added some \$18 million annually last year for the domestic violence justice strategy. This is real, concrete evidence of what this government is doing to help stop abuse in this province.

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Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I thank my friend from York West, where he will now have to match 72% in the next election to be credible as a candidate, because that's what the candidate won by last night, thanks to the assistance of the member for York West provincially.

I want to comment to my colleague from Niagara Centre and ask him about the real problem that's out there, that is, insufficient funding so our police forces cannot have the number of individuals they would like to have to engage in community policing, to be able to go into the secondary schools and have a liaison with the students and with the members of the faculty of those schools, to be in the front line, to be able to respond to genuine problems which arise in our part of the province and other parts of the province.

I was shocked to learn, though I shouldn't have been, that when his government was in power there were more police officers on the streets of Ontario than there are today. I thought with all the rhetoric, with the big show that was put on when the police officers were in the gallery, the phony dog-and-pony show that went on at that time, that somehow we had doubled the number of police officers in Ontario. I know in the Niagara region there are instances when officers are unable to respond simply because there is not a sufficient number of them there.

The province put a little carrot out for five years and said, "You can hire some more people," but they've downloaded \$18 million of additional responsibility on the local taxpayer. So when the police board endeavours to get some money from regional council, it's much tougher today.

I would be interested in the member's comment on the lack of police in the province today, particularly in Niagara.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the speech of my colleague from Niagara Centre. He has a real gift for communicating, and part of that is his ability to take very serious objects and use incredible humour—he had me in tears a couple of times there, throughout—to make a point, particularly an important social point. I think he does that through humour and through his down-to-earth

examples, arguably better than anyone else in this House. When he talks about the manifestations of the cuts you have made, it's a shame that government members don't pay a lot more attention to this. Think about what's going on out there on the streets right now. There are homeless people on virtually every corner when you walk around in downtown Toronto, and in a lot of our other major centres. Most of the people here, within a few years, are not that far off my age. When I was growing up, we didn't see that. It wasn't in Toronto; it certainly wasn't in my home town. It didn't exist; neither did food banks, which have now become institutionalized.

Why aren't you fearful over the recent reports that tuberculosis is coming back in big numbers, and in many cases it's happening to people who are on the street, when their health has deteriorated, when they're congregated together? Why isn't that considered to be as big a crime as kids cleaning windshields for a few bucks?

Again, nobody is condoning the odd ones who are aggressive, but you have your priorities so out of whack as a government by saying that this is the important safe street issue that you're going to lead with in this Legislature that it takes someone like Peter Kormos to bring you down to earth.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I enjoyed the presentation from the member for Niagara Centre. He is always very passionate when he speaks about law and order. As a defence lawyer, I understand the concerns he has regarding legislation that tries to regulate certain activities Ontarians may find offensive, but I found his presentation very limited, to the area of squeegee kids, and he not talk about other portions of the bill.

I would like to ask the member, for example, what's wrong with the provision of section 2 of the bill, which says that no person shall solicit in a manner that is aggressive, that no person shall be solicited and threatened with physical harm, that no person's path shall be obstructed by a person soliciting if the person has indicated that he is not interested or fails to respond and that no abusive language shall be used by a person soliciting citizens using a sidewalk or public streets. I would like the member to address those issues, because it's important for us to know if the member disagrees with those provisions, and then to suggest some amendments.

Also, in subsection 3(2) where it says that no person shall be solicited near an automated teller machine or in a public transit stop or in a parking lot, those are provisions that I would like comments from the member on, not just restricted to squeegee kids.

Mr Kormos: First, to the member who just spoke. I indicated earlier that if you look at the extortion section of the Criminal Code, what your definition of "aggressive manner" does is replicate the extortion section. So if somebody is using threats of violence to get somebody to give him money, that's called extortion. By all means, go ahead, if somebody is using threats of violence to obtain money from a passerby, have that person arrested and charged with extortion and let the courts deal with that person in the appropriate manner.

Quite frankly, the other issues you raised, I already said, why do you go to an ATM to solicit? Because that's where the money is. You don't solicit on a dark, untravelling street. What better place to solicit than at a TTC stop? Quite frankly, if a TTC security person wants to oust you from the TTC station, they can. They can charge you with trespassing, and they do.

I'll go on to one of the other issues; you didn't raise it. You can't be drunk or stoned when you solicit. My God. Most of us, before we'd conduct ourselves in that kind of way, would have to suppress so much of our own egos and pride we'd have to be drunk and stoned—think about it—before we could bring ourselves to do that. These people are living sad, desperate lives, and I understand why they might get drunk and then go out and solicit.

Just quickly, look what we're doing here. You remember Alice's Restaurant, Arlo Guthrie? Remember, Guthrie shows up at the draft board after having been convicted of littering? Guthrie is interviewed by the military interviewer, and when he discovers he has got a littering conviction, he sends him over to the Group W bench with the rapists and the murderers and other mean and evil people. They said, "What are you here for?" He says, "Littering." We're putting litterers on the Group W bench. We're putting squeegee kids into criminal cells. It's ridiculous.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): This country has a long legal tradition, based upon the English tradition, which goes back 1,000 years: the crown versus the accused. When an individual does such harm to the public good, not to the victim, this is a reason to initiate a state action against an accused.

For 1,000 years, the victim had no status before our criminal courts. Oh, sure, they were a witness, hopefully, but they did not have status of any kind. They weren't part of the proceedings. I'm proud of our government's record of recognizing for the first time in Ontario the rights of victims, because they are innocent parties. We today recognized innocent victims and our victims' rights bill does that too. Somewhere along the line—because we've ignored victims, and I have yet to hear anyone on the opposition discuss victims in relation to this bill—we forgot that victims also have rights, and so does society.

I believe that we all should have the right to drive our roads without fear and apprehension; we should have the right to walk our public places without fear and apprehension.

The opposition offers no protection. Do I feel apprehensive when I'm approached by a squeegee person or an aggressive panhandler? I may not. But I can assure you my daughter does; I can assure you my mother does; I can assure you your wives do. But they say: "That's their problem. They'll get used to it. That's the big-city way." We do not have to get used to feeling apprehensive in our public places. If we do that, then our society is on the slippery road to ruin.

Sir Robert Peel, when he initiated the first modern police force as we know it in the UK, spoke about his fear of crime and disorder, not just crime as we know it but also disorder on our streets. Graffiti, public displays of drunkenness, squeegee persons, aggressive panhandling: These are all signs of disorder on our streets that lead to fear and to lack of co-operation with the police, and are not to be tolerated in a democratic society.

Why do we need this bill? Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act, 1999, is only one element of our government's broad effort to make our towns and cities safer places to live and raise a family. It deals with squeegeeing, aggressive solicitation and the disposal of dangerous objects in parks and playgrounds. These are the activities, among other signs of disorder, that interfere with people's ability to safely use public places and affect the quality of life in our communities.

From media reports, we know that these are problems not just in Toronto but in places like Kingston, Oshawa, Ottawa, Hamilton, London and Peterborough. We travelled, as a crime commission, to over 70 different locations around this province, and on many occasions these concerns were voiced.

The government promised in the Blueprint and the throne speech to introduce legislation to stop these disorderly activities. The people of Ontario have a right to drive the roads and enjoy places in safety and security. The police have asked for this legislation to help them in their job to serve and protect. Right now, I've had a number of police officers tell me that when they write a ticket for obstruction of traffic under the Highway Traffic Act, that ticket is ripped up in front of their face.

The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police passed a resolution at its 1998 annual general meeting calling on the government of Ontario to make squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling arrestable offences. The mayor of the city of Toronto made a similar request.

Existing municipal and provincial laws do not capture squeegeeing. They are not strong enough to deter aggressive solicitation. The Highway Traffic Act stops people from entering a roadway to stop a vehicle, but squeegeeing takes place when the vehicles are already stopped. The Trespass to Property Act applies mainly to private property and does not have a jail term as a sentence. The Liquor Licence Act makes public drunkenness an offence, but can only be applied in cases of extreme intoxication. Municipal bylaws do not permit arrest or probation or imprisonment.

What do we want to accomplish in this bill? If passed, the Safe Streets Act would allow Ontario to use its provincial jurisdiction to put in place legislation with stronger penalties. The Safe Streets Act proposes to amend the Highway Traffic Act to capture commercial activity on the roadway, such as squeegeeing, as an offence.

The bill would create new provincial offences: soliciting in an aggressive manner; soliciting in places where the person solicited cannot ignore the solicitation and move away; and lastly, the disposition of used condoms,

syringes and broken glass in those outdoor places such as parks without taking reasonable precautions.

The police would have the power to warn or arrest the offenders. The courts would be able to impose a fine, probation or jail for these offences, plus many of the alternative remedies available to the judicial system.

The Highway Traffic Act amendment: To make commercial activities on the roadways, such as squeegeeing, illegal, the safe streets bill proposes to close a loophole in the Highway Traffic Act. It would become illegal to approach a vehicle to offer, sell or provide anything to anyone in the vehicle. By closing that loophole, the Highway Traffic Act would more effectively deal with an activity that poses a danger not only to the people in the vehicles but also to the offender on the street. The amendment would exempt tow trucks and other emergency vehicles that help motorists in trouble.

Aggressive solicitation: The Safe Streets Act makes aggressive solicitation a new provincial offence. "Aggressive" is defined in the following ways:

(1) Threatening physical harm to the person solicited—that is the most obvious; (2) blocking the path of a person during or after a solicitation; (3) using abusive language while soliciting; (4) following the person being solicited; (5) soliciting while under the influence of alcohol or drugs; and (6) continuing to solicit the person even after the person says no.

Solicitation in a captive audience situation: The safe schools—the safe streets bill proposes a new offence: solicitation in places where people cannot easily move away. Someone, for instance, standing at a bank machine waiting for the cash to come out is in a vulnerable situation. Soliciting someone in that position puts the person's safe use of a public place at risk.

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The full list of captive audience situations where the bill proposes to ban solicitation includes: at all automated teller machines; at a pay phone, a public toilet facility, taxi stand or transit stop; on a bus or any other transit vehicle; while someone is getting in or out of a vehicle or is in a parking lot; while on a roadway in order to solicit from a person in a vehicle.

We believe that the safe schools act—the Safe Streets Act, if passed, will be an effective and useful deterrent for our police services.

We are also concerned about and have included offences regarding the disposal of dangerous objects. The people of Ontario have raised this issue of concern about the safe use of public spaces. Children and families are being exposed to syringes, used condoms and broken glass in their neighbourhood parks and schoolyards. These dangerous objects are left there by careless and uncaring individuals. The Safe Streets Act would make it an offence to throw dangerous objects in laneways, parks and schoolyards. People must take reasonable precautions to dispose of these kinds of objects. This provision is included because we value kids' ability to play in public places in safety.

There would be additional powers given to the police. If passed, Bill 8 would give the police the power to crack down on these proposed offences. The police will still retain the discretion to issue a warning or write a ticket. The police would be able to arrest offenders who refuse to stop engaging in these activities. The police would also be able to arrest offenders for identification purposes.

Proposed penalties under the act: The courts, we believe, must have a full range of penalties to make the police's work more effective. The Safe Streets Act would empower courts to impose a fine or probation as a sentence for these offences and to jail repeat offenders. Probation itself could consist of community service, restitution or, if the offender is willing, drug or alcohol counselling. We would expect these penalties to send a strong message to people engaged in offences addressed by this legislation.

The government believes that the Safe Streets Act reinforces the quality of life we expect and deserve in our communities. Our government is doing what needs to be done to protect the safe use of public places.

I am proud to be part of a government that takes leadership seriously, operating in a responsive and responsible way to matters of public concern.

As I said when I initiated my talk, I think this bill addresses the rights of victims and the rights of our society. It is not enough to talk about whether it's criminalization or not. I do not believe it is. I think these matters deal with public disorder, which comes under the provincial jurisdiction. No doubt, it will be tested, as most bills are these days, but we are assured that this falls within the purview of the jurisdiction of the province of Ontario. It is most important. I think we have had some discussion about the broken windows theory, and there are many theories that are predominant. There are really three, and I'd like to spend a couple of minutes discussing them and then ending with the broken windows theory.

The first theory is I guess what we'd call the American roots of crime theory. This theory was propounded earlier but really was codified by the federal commission in the United States reporting to President Johnson in 1967, some 30 years ago. Basically, and I'd like to word it carefully and fairly, I believe that the roots of crime theory said that it wasn't really the fault of an offender when he or she committed this act; it was really the fault of parenting or society. In order to do something about it, I believe it would require a massive state intrusion on the family, and I don't know whether that's possible in a democracy. I have yet to be convinced by any studies I've seen that the theory works, that the theory that removes responsibility from the offender in any way helps us to prevent crime.

The second theory is an interesting one. It's usually referred to as the reform theory and deals with the use of automobiles, which is our blessing and our curse in our society, and has become very popular since 1945. The theory simply is that if you put enough police cars on the road, that will prevent crime and that's what we should

be doing. It held many attractions, not so much in Canada but in the United States, because it totally isolated in many respects the police officer from the public and therefore cut down corruption, a vice that fortunately our society has not had to deal with in any major way but they have in the States, and the chiefs usually like it because it removes discretion from the police officer. The studies are clear that not only does flooding an area with patrols willy-nilly not prevent crime, but in less than 3% of the cases is the accused ever apprehended.

That whole milieu of the reform model deals with catching the crook after the crime has been committed, which is unfortunate. It led, for instance, to something that happened in Ontario not too long ago, where the police did not warn of a possible serial rapist. They were so intent on catching the crook, the rapist in this case, that they forgot that their first duty is not to catch the criminal; their first duty is to protect and to prevent crime. The court quite properly, in my opinion, pointed that out in a most forceful way to the police.

The third is the broken windows theory, and the example is trite, but if you have a house with a broken window and you don't repair it and all the houses around are in good shape, sooner or later every window in that house will be broken because it is a sign of someone not caring, it is a sign of disorder. That application can be taken to our streets. The Safe Streets Act is saying to everyone: We want our streets back. We are entitled to have our streets back, where our wives and mothers and children can walk the streets without fear, without apprehension and in safety.

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Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I notice that the member from Cambridge made what I recognize to have been a bit of a slip of his tongue, and he corrected himself very quickly, when he referred to this as the Safe Schools Act, when of course it's the Safe Streets Act. But I thought it perhaps was not a totally accidental slip of the tongue, because as I recall the Safe Schools Act, which the member from Cambridge would have been a strong supporter of, it had something to do with simply getting rid of the problem kids in the school, getting them out of the school to create a safer school setting for students who remain. It didn't have much to do with what you would do with the kids once you got them out of the school setting, it didn't say anything about what kind of program you might put them into; it just basically got those kids out of sight. I think that is essentially what the Safe Streets Act does. It wants to simply get the squeegee kids out of sight, to create an illusion of safety because we have gotten rid of the visible problem that seems to be upsetting people.

I also thought it was interesting that there was a reference to the Safe Schools Act because, as I understand, it is probably about 85% of panhandlers, people we see as squeegee kids who actually have not graduated from high school. Nobody wants to ask, why are these people on the streets? What kinds of problems did they have that

prevented them from getting the kind of education that would lead them into productive jobs?

What is even more troubling for me is that this is a government that simply wants to ignore the underlying issues even as they take steps that make the underlying problems worse. Again I'll come back to the concern about whether or not the people who are being dealt with in this Safe Streets Act are people who have not been able to make it through our education system for whatever reason: home background, disabilities, all kinds of reasons that can prevent young people from getting through their high school program and getting the education they need. This government with its new high school curriculum is about to make the dropout rate from high schools significantly greater. I have been told that the grade 9 curriculum in mathematics alone, if it's implemented, would lead to the failure of about 50% of the kids in grade 9.

Mr Christopherson: I thought it was interesting that the member from Cambridge opened up his remarks by making reference to their Victims' Bill of Rights. I think that is a perfect example of the sort of smoke-and-mirrors politics that this government has polished to a perfection in terms of saying one thing and entitling things one way, but the reality being the other. The Victims' Bill of Rights is the best example there is, because we have on record what they said and we have on record what the Supreme Court of Canada said.

In the speech from the throne on September 27, 1995, the Lieutenant Governor on behalf of the Mike Harris government said, "As the first step in righting the balance between those who live outside the law and those who depend on the law for protection, this session your government will introduce a Victims' Bill of Rights."

On second reading on December 13, 1995, then-Attorney General Charles Harnick said: "This legislation is a major step in righting the balance between the needs of victims and the rights of the accused. It is one of the most comprehensive victims' bills of rights in this country."

He went on to say: "It'll bring meaningful change to the way victims are treated in the criminal justice system. We will give them the recognition and the support that they deserve."

All of that debate was about the fact that nobody else cared except them.

What happened in May of this year? I will tell you. Mr Justice Gerald Day—excuse me, it was the Ontario Court (General Division), not the Supreme Court. The judge, Mr Justice Day, said it's a "tepid statutory endorsement."

Secondly he said, "The act is a statement of principle and policy, beguilingly clothed in the language of legislation."

He went on to say, "I conclude that the Legislature"—meaning you guys, because you voted it in—"did not intend for section 2(1) of the Victims' Bill of Rights to provide rights to the victims of crime." It didn't do what you said and this won't either.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): I would like to compliment the member from Cambridge for his comments. It was a very rational and a very healthy debate. He explained very clearly where the government is going and why we're going in that direction.

I have to state for the record that some of the comments that have come across the floor saddened me. Whether it's heckling or whether it's actually comments in debate, they have attacked us personally for supporting this thing. They have stated that we're vicious, mean-spirited, ugly, angry people. When they're making those statements, at the same time they're making statements that we're touching hot buttons. For me, the definition of "hot button" is the democratic will of the people. The definition of a "hot button" is that people state they want this done. At the same time, while they're making these statements, they're saying, "Who's asking for these things?"

I hold in my hand a bylaw that was passed by the Hamilton-Wentworth regional council October 5, 1999. I think it's a wonderful council. Aggressive panhandling bylaw: "No person shall aggressively panhandle on any streets or sidewalks regulated by this bylaw. No person shall solicit money from any pedestrian by panhandling on any streets."

The reality is that there are many cities across this province that have concerns, and those concerns are reflected as a result of the democratic will of the people in their community. The business people who operate their businesses, the people who walk down the street, who drive through the streets want to drive and walk unencumbered. They don't want to walk in fear or apprehension. They don't need to be aggressively approached and followed down the street because they won't hand over money to the panhandlers. That's what this is about.

I should point out that nowhere in this legislation does the word "squeegee" appear.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I've heard this evening the presentation from members of the government that this bill is intended to ensure the safety of the people of Ontario. I have to say, from my part of the world, it's something I had to explain to them. I had to say, "Well, this is the purpose for which the legislation is intended." I think it's unusual that we have a bill like this that's going to address a situation that is, for the most part, localized and is not really an issue for most of the people in the province.

I heard the member from Cambridge earlier this evening talk about some people he knows who would be intimidated. I could not help but note that the examples he presented were all female. I think I would like to make a statement this evening that as a small female person who has from time to time been approached by these people, never once have I been intimidated by them. I have been moved by them and, like my colleague from Niagara Centre, have been so moved that I've even donated to their cause.

I think the government would do better to consider the reasons why these people find themselves in need of asking for support and looking for ways to ameliorate their situation than to say, "You're breaking the law," making it illegal for these people who are in a desperate situation to have to do this.

So I rise in the House tonight to say that I think it's most unfortunate that we have to take time to consider this kind of legislation when there are so many important issues—issues in my riding—that aren't getting addressed by this government.

Mr Martiniuk: I would like to thank the member for Hamilton West for his comments, the member for Stoney Creek and the member for Frontenac-Lennox.

I ended off by saying, and I'll repeat it, I believe that this bill will permit us to take back our streets for the citizens of this province. To say that perhaps we shouldn't pass this bill because it only affects some parts of our province is taking parochialism, I believe, to an extreme and I cannot accept it. I do believe that the problem, though localized to six major urban areas, was in fact spreading to others.

I thank you very much for the time spent this evening.
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Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Mr Speaker, I'd like to let you know that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Hamilton Mountain.

The first thing I'd like to say related to this particular bill is that I'm going to concentrate my remarks. While the members opposite say that this has nothing to do with squeegeeing, we all know that's what we're talking about, as a good part of the impact of this is on, as you say, people soliciting on roadways. So I will be talking about that, panhandling and the implications I think are there for many of these young people, and the penalties upon conviction.

I want to start by saying that I really do believe that this is very limited, narrow-minded—and I hesitate to use the term, but I believe it's narrow—and it's not a developed concept in trying to address what I'm sure we all agree is a social issue. Not only that, but in many instances it is not particularly democratic, and I believe it will be challenged, as it is right now, at the moment, as we speak, in other jurisdictions that have attempted to do the same thing in a limiting manner.

I'd like to pose two questions, and these are not my questions: Is it good public policy to use legal coercion against peaceful panhandlers? Can it be morally right in a democratic society to prevent one person from publicly saying to another, "I'm in trouble and I need help"? These are two questions that were addressed in a recent paper which was produced by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, if not the most then probably one of the most credible social policy think-tanks in the country, and I might modestly add, situated in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

That's not the reason why I give it credibility but because I have found over the years that it has done some excellent work. The title of their particular report is

Down and Out in Winnipeg and Toronto: The Ethics of Legislating Against Panhandling. It presents a thoughtful, convincing argument that we cannot expect much success if we simply treat panhandling as an isolated problem to be dealt with by police action. Panhandling and squeegeeing are symptoms of a deeper social problem, surely. We must address the underlying causes of the so-called problem. Actually, I prefer to call it a complex social challenge.

I suggest that we need to have a comprehensive social development approach providing meaningful job opportunities, housing, social services. This has to be coordinated and it must be a multi-sectoral response because there is no one-size-fits-all punitive measure isolated to a few things that is going to solve this sort of challenge.

I must say I will give this government credit on having commissioned a report on the development of the early years—we have to see what it means in terms of responding to that—the Fraser Mustard-McCain report, an excellent, fabulous piece of work, all research-based, that will change the attitude of many of the supporters of the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario if they truly read it, because they'll no longer be able to say, "Early childhood education is only the purview of those who would like to see their children babysat." It's much, much deeper than that.

I would say, by extension, that so too must we invest in youth as well, who are beyond, of course, just the early years, and particularly those groups—and this happens perhaps in most societies—who are alienated from mainstream society: the homeless, the unemployed, many who are suffering from mental illness. In that category, of course, we use euphemistically the term "squeegee kids."

For the Attorney General to introduce legislation to jail squeegee kids and panhandlers who are repeat offenders, I find, frankly, quite incredible. That they will be repeat offenders is a given because they undoubtedly won't be able to pay the fine on a first conviction, which gives a penalty of not more than \$500, and on each subsequent conviction, not more than \$1,000 or imprisonment for a term of not more than six months or both. Let alone, I'd be surprised to see too many judges acting on that kind of thing for these sorts of convictions.

It seems to me that somebody doesn't understand either how to deal with or the importance of trying to deal with, or at least the importance of attempting to make an effort in dealing with, marginalized members of society, certainly ones who can't pay the fine in the first place because of their particular state of being in their lives by virtue of the fact that they are living on the street. So of course they will get bumped up to the subsequent conviction category. Again, they won't be able to make payments, so what will happen ultimately is that they may be, at least the bill suggests they should be, imprisoned.

Having served as the Minister of Correctional Services during my first term in office, I know first-hand how crowded our jails are, so I ask, does the Attorney General talk to the Minister of Correctional Services about the

appropriateness of this way of dealing with this problem? Even Corrections used to have a whole series of community programs to help people adjust. There used to be a whole series of preventive programs—

Interjection.

Mr Patten:—and the member for Hamilton Centre, the former Corrections minister, would know this. We have very little now. Everything seems to point towards hitting hard, being punitive, putting them away, as if somehow you are dealing with people who are doing this by choice, totally right of mind, totally of their own convictions, with many other alternatives. Surely, members, you know this is not the case. We are dealing with people who need some support, some who need some treatment I would venture to say, some who need to see some opportunities, some who need some counselling and certainly some immediate opportunities for alternatives. Furthermore, to announce this initiative during Crime Prevention Week I find more than a tad ironic. To be debating the law on the eve of National Child Day, which is this week, I also find to be somewhat interesting.

I want to talk about this legally binding international convention. The commemoration of two historic United Nations events has already taken place: The adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child on November 20, 1959, and the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 10 years ago, on November 20, 1989, says more about how out of step this particular piece of legislation is, because these legally binding international conventions, which are the most widely ratified human rights treaties in history, set legal and moral standards for the protection and care of children. A child, by this convention, is anyone 18 years and under.

One of the articles says: "No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty, unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time." The article also prohibits children who are deprived of their liberty from being detained together with adults.

The new federal youth justice strategy is in sync with the convention and is attempting to address prevention through a social development approach. It proposes new youth justice legislation to use intensive custody as a last resort for the most high-risk youth who are repeat violent offenders or have committed murder, attempted murder, manslaughter or aggressive sexual assaults. Obviously, in those cases, it's a different set of circumstances.

The federal youth justice strategy is built on several principles: partnership with provinces and territories, a multi-disciplinary approach—I underline that—citizen and community involvement—I underline that, because there are some fine things that are taking place in many communities—and children and youth as a national priority. It would appear that the provisions in Bill 8 are out of step with the current thinking about sentencing both

nationally and internationally. I suggest that should be considered.

If this government knew anything about young people who are homeless, it would know why they're on the street in the first place. I want to make reference to a report that is quite lucid and indicates some very interesting stats. The Shout Clinic, a program of Central Toronto Community Health Centres, did a groundbreaking report on homeless youth and employment. Making Money, the Shout Clinic report on homeless youth and employment, profiles the various ways that homeless and street-involved youth currently make money in Toronto, including formal employment, social assistance, sex trade work, criminal activity, squeegee cleaning and panhandling.

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The largest group of street youth interviewed for this study were in fact youth who engaged in either panhandling or squeegeeing as a main means for generating income. The report said:

"The existing research in Canada indicates that these youth tend to be fiercely independent and chose to squeegee instead of panhandle ... because of a strong work ethic, in which they believe they should provide a service to receive money. This research also indicates that squeegeeing as an activity is associated with 'heightened psychological well-being and a reduction of criminal activity.'"

Some may agree that this is as constructive as perhaps they are seeing themselves, but at least it's a positive sense from some of these youngsters.

My time is running out fast, and I would like to deal with one last thing for my last minute. That is that the safety bill is being challenged in a number of jurisdictions: in Ontario, by poverty activists, in Winnipeg and I believe in Vancouver as well. In fact, we will see this occur in Ontario because while everyone would agree there is a nuisance factor related to all of this—there are ways in which we want to deal with that—this only deals with the punitive measure, without any understanding or any constructive, positive alternatives.

I'd like to end by quoting Professor Julian Roberts, who says:

"Are squeegee kids a safety threat? I often hear people say that by hopping in front of vehicles at traffic lights, the kids are likely to cause an accident. Let's remember these kids ply their trade on their flat feet and approach stationary vehicles. They know what they're doing.

"If these kids are a safety hazard, where does that leave bike couriers weaving in and out of lanes at rush hour while travelling at speed on unstable two-wheeled vehicles? Or what about rollerbladers, lurching their way down the street, with no effective way of stopping quickly and safely? Are these not potential accidents waiting to happen? There's nothing about these groups in the 'safety bill.'"

My final comment is that this bill does not in any way address something other than to put people in jail when what it needs is a compassionate response in order to

respond to a fairly complex social condition in which we have people who are needing and wanting a much more comprehensive response.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'm grateful for the opportunity to add to this debate. When I first heard the term "Safe Streets Act," it reminded me of the safe schools policy, when it first came to the Hamilton Board of Education. At the time, it provided very simplistic solutions to a very complex problem: If students did something wrong, suspension or even expulsion.

Eventually, the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police spoke against that part of the policy because they may have been safe schools, but they were dangerous streets, and these kids were left unsupervised on the streets.

This rings a few similar bells, but the issues here are much more complex. I want to add three aspects to this issue that I really hope the government will think about when drafting and implementing this act, and hopefully adding some more well-thought-out acts in the future, that is: probation officers and the lack of resources for probation officers; mental health services and the cut-backs and what that has done to the crime statistics; and privatization of police officers.

The probation officers' caseloads in Ontario remain at 70% above the national average. Within the Ministry of Community and Social Services, there are approximately 210 probation officers assigned to 12 area offices, supervising nearly 10,000 cases.

In addition to the Criminal Code, the Young Offenders Act and the Provincial Offences Act, these officers must also be mindful of the Child and Family Services Act. Caseloads are reflective of this reality.

A related point is the disparity of caseloads. For example, Toronto has half the caseload per probation officer that my region does, Hamilton-Wentworth, and that needs to be addressed.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services employs 635 probation and parole officers reporting to 40 area managers. In the ministry, there are approximately 72,000 clients under supervision, including 11,000 phase-two young offenders. During the 1996-97 fiscal year, there were approximately 53,000 adult offenders under supervision in the community on any given day.

In essence, 87% of the offending population is found within the community, yet the Correctional Services division allocates only 20% of the budget towards community supervision. Meanwhile, 77% of the budget is spent on incarcerating 13% of all offenders. The question that has to be asked is, where do most offences occur? Clearly, it would be prudent for policy-makers to focus attention on the community, particularly given that almost 90% of the ministry's clientele is being supervised in the community, in that environment.

Reviews of research repeatedly indicate that probation officers are the criminal justice practitioners best able to predict recidivism. When I was working in the Hamilton school board and I spoke with probation officers and

youth officers on a weekly basis, sometimes more often than that, I was appalled that the probation officer often saw the young offenders once every two weeks. That's clearly not enough if we truly want to prevent crime, as the member opposite was alluding to.

If we truly want to make our streets safe, it is imperative that the situation of the mentally ill offenders also be examined. Since the government's initiative to deinstitutionalize the mentally ill in the 1970s and the 1980s, there has been an inadequate investment in community resources to support these individuals. Research shows that at least 12% of offenders suffer from some type of mental or emotional disorder, and this subset of offenders is at higher risk to re-offend, particularly if they're not complying with their medication. Yet once they are out of jail or prison, there is very little monitoring of their behaviour. To further exacerbate this situation, these clients are often faced with a lack of appropriate housing and community supports.

Very quickly, to mention a case in Hamilton, a young offender in a holding facility who is severely disturbed will be out next week. There are no resources for him. The waiting list is over a year long. I was speaking last night with the boy's mother, who has her own medical condition, which is exacerbated by stress, and she is afraid for when her son comes out next week. She knows that he'll be back if he doesn't get the support that he needs.

It's very simplistic to say we take these kids, whether they're squeegee kids or any type of young offender, and put them in jail, without having the appropriate resources once they are out. This particular young person has been getting counselling in the facility and his mother says there has been some improvement. This needs to continue when he gets out. A biweekly visit to a probation officer isn't going to do it.

There is very little within our system of social health and welfare that can offer Ontario youth at risk and their desperate parents some assistance with situations like these.

I'd like to talk about the last point, and this is privatization of our police officers. I was heartened to hear from the Solicitor General that the answer is no, he doesn't agree with privatization, but I'd like to see proof in legislation of that.

I'll give you a case study again that happened in Hamilton, in my riding actually, in the last few months. The member for Hamilton West probably remembers this. It was a high-speed police chase. A young offender had stolen a vehicle and was chased by a private security officer, who was obviously not trained properly in this regard. This young man drove at high speed up the mountain and crashed into a house on Upper Ottawa on Hamilton Mountain, exploding the car of course, being killed instantly and putting the people who were at home at the time at risk. Their house caught on fire.

An appropriately trained police force knew not to chase this boy. They were aware of the situation, but they were properly trained and they knew not to chase him. In

fact, they then went into the house to save the residents of the house from being burned.

Here's the irony: The private officer is not held accountable; he's simply a witness in this case. Our publicly and professionally trained police officers are being investigated by the SIU. That's not fair, that's not appropriate, that's not professional and that's not solving the problem.

The public is willing to pay for their safety and security; they're willing to pay for properly trained police officers. I was speaking to them earlier and they need more resources to be trained. Research has shown that the public is willing to pay when it comes to their safety and when it comes to their health care. I hope the government heeds these requests as well as the requests for more resources for probation officers, to prevent the crime as well as to address the crime after it has happened.

Thank you for the opportunity.

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Mr Christopherson: I'm pleased to rise and comment on the remarks of my colleagues from Timiskaming-Cochrane and of course our rookie member on Hamilton Mountain, who is doing an excellent job, I must say, in representing the community.

Hon Mr Jackson: Oh, that's not fair. I thought it was a good speech. Don't call her a rookie.

Mr Christopherson: There's nothing offensive about "rookie." You were one too, you know; everybody was. Well, you might be special, Cam. I acknowledge you're very special.

However, to the point. Like the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane—

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): Ottawa Centre.

Mr Christopherson: Now, why did I do that? I'm sorry, Ottawa Centre. Forgive me.

Hon Mr Jackson: Now he sounds like a rookie. Can I send you over a floor plan?

Mr Christopherson: Yes, but can I read it? That seems to be the problem. I have a floor plan; reading it accurately seems to be the problem. My apologies, Richard.

The member from Ottawa Centre commented that his first round in cabinet was as minister of corrections and we share that history. Neither of us, I should point out, ever rose to the lofty heights of being a Harris crime commissioner, but we did serve as justice ministers. I agree with him and I agree with the angle also taken by my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, and that is that everything you do is based on this notion of, one of your favourite phrases, "cracking down." Everything is cracking down.

One of the first things you learn when you become minister of corrections is that one of the things you have to determine right away in dealing with individuals is, have you got someone in front of you that's mad, bad or sad? That's putting it in a very brief sentence, but much of what happens in corrections is applying the right

treatment, if you will, support, sometimes it's disciplinary action, but applying the right things to the right person in the right circumstances. It's OK to hire someone in the Premier's office that has a criminal record in the past and we've had that happen, but God help when we talk, about a group of kids that are just trying to survive. You're going to crack down on them. You guys are so tough—crack down on those kids.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Order. You could take these conversations outside. Reset the clock. The member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's a pleasure to rise to respond to the members from Ottawa Centre, Hamilton and Hamilton Mountain on safe streets. The interesting thing is that the member from Cambridge, who was a co-chair of the crime commission during the last term, toured the province, and during that tour of the province the community identified a problem. The community was made up of citizens, police leaders, municipal leaders. The problem they identified was people taking over our streets, people jumping in the middle of traffic for the purpose of squeegeeing, for commercial purposes, intimidating people to give them money in exchange for that service. The community identified this problem and came to our government to be a part of a solution. Along with community problems and community policing, part of the solution is a community-oriented government. We are a community-oriented government, and we have implemented some of the solutions the community has asked us for. The solution was to come up with the Safe Streets Act by outlawing squeegeeing, thereby preventing any risk to young people jumping in front of traffic in exchange for money, and by preventing aggressive panhandling.

A member from across the floor said she would not be intimidated if she was aggressively panhandled. You know what? It wouldn't be an offence. If she wasn't intimidated, she doesn't have to make the complaint; there would be no offence. So she's welcome to turn over all her money. But for the people in this province who are intimidated, this government is listening.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Let me first of all say how refreshing it was to hear tonight two members who actually know what they're talking about, and that's the member for Ottawa Centre and the member for Hamilton Mountain. They talked about the real issues we should be talking about when we're talking about the criminal justice system. We should be talking about, when somebody falls off the track, what is the best way to deal with that individual in order to bring that individual back on track?

The member for Hamilton Mountain, as a psychologist for the school board in Hamilton, knows how to deal with these issues and knows how to deal with those problems. It is not by cracking down on people but it's by taking that young individual and seeing whatever went wrong with that individual and trying to help that person so that

they can truly lead a productive life in our society. That's what it's really all about.

We all know that the kind of action the government wants to take under this legislation, it can already do so. The criminal law provides for it.

The thought struck me while I was sitting here that maybe this is the kind of legislation that we should immediately refer, once it's passed, and undoubtedly it will be passed, taking their attitude into account, to the Red Tape Commission and ask Frank Sheehan, the member who is serving for \$1 a year, "Is this legislation necessary in order for the government to basically enforce the laws that are out there right now?" I am sure that Frank Sheehan, being the honourable man that he is on the honourable commission that he leads, will say: "No, this law is not needed. The Red Tape Commission will strike this law down because it is already dealt with in our Criminal Code."

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'm delighted to take two minutes and compliment my colleagues from Ottawa Centre and Hamilton Mountain. I think they have exposed very well the contents of the bill and the causes that the government fails to recognize.

I think perhaps there is nothing more offensive than a homeless person passing the night on the sidewalk, on a grill, instead of someone panhandling on the street. I think people would find that much more offensive than somebody who is panhandling.

Let me say that this type of legislation is exactly typical of this government. They keep on throwing out pieces of legislation without considering the consequences, without putting into place any other mechanism, as they say, any other infrastructure, to take care of the following problems. I have to say, regrettably, the members of the government do not consider that if they go ahead and pass this piece of legislation, there is nothing else in place to take care of those people.

They are going after a couple of hundred kids. The government keeps on failing to act, if you will, to consider passing legislation in dealing with 200,000 kids, the subject of deadbeat parents. Instead of looking after that, passing legislation to look after 200,000 kids and their mothers, or fathers, whatever, they are going after a couple of hundred kids.

This piece of legislation does not belong in this House. I think it will never reach the courts. I think it will actually tangle the courts more than ever. I would hope that the members of the government will reconsider this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Response, the member for Ottawa Centre?

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Mr Patten: I'd like to thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for a very astute set of comments, and the members for Hamilton Centre, London-Fanshawe, Kingston and the Islands and York West, especially the latter two, for their extremely astute observations. I appreciate that very much.

I would like to say, though, in response to a number of comments, that I hope this legislation isn't going to be one of those pieces that is time-allocated by closure and just rammed through, that there will be an opportunity for some debate.

As you've heard by the reactions of a number of members, this is not a universal issue throughout Ontario. It's not a concern in many communities. It's of some concern in some other communities, perhaps of greatest concern in the Toronto area. Fine. Let's make sure we have legislation that does this.

It's interesting that the legislation, under section 177, says this—listen to this—subsection (1), "No person, while on the roadway, shall solicit a ride from the driver of a motor vehicle other than a public passenger conveyance."

That means that there's no hitchhiking. Imagine being in northern Ontario. What would happen? Imagine being a student.

Interjections.

Mr Patten: All right, so the members say it's already a law. Well, if it's a law, why is it in there again? Most of what you have in here is already in bylaws, has already been dealt with by the municipalities. It's a redundant thing. It's just an attempt to get the optics to appease those people who do not want to show any understanding to people trying to survive on the streets. Shame on you.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak on the new Safe Streets Act.

I would like to congratulate the Attorney General, the Honourable Jim Flaherty, for bringing this bill forward. I can tell you that it is an important and timely issue to my constituents.

Last week I hosted a crime and prevention forum in the town of Newmarket in the riding of York North. Many of my constituents attended, as well as representatives from the local school boards, Crime Stoppers, the VCARS program and other programs run by the York Regional Police.

I would like to thank all those who attended to give their expert advice, as well as those concerned citizens who came forward to voice their concerns on crime and safety issues.

Speaking personally to my constituents during this forum, I can tell you that they know Ontario is a great place to live. We are the economic engine of Canada. We have high employment, and we have a good standard of living.

Nevertheless, they still do not feel as safe as they should travelling in our cities. Many of my constituents do not feel safe walking down their own streets because of fear of harassment. Being so close to Toronto, many of my constituents commute to work here. When they arrive, many have to walk or drive on streets where the threat of aggressive solicitation is always close at hand. Mothers with children and seniors are particularly vulnerable to harassment from aggressive panhandlers.

Certainly we owe it to them to protect them from this sort of unnecessary harassment.

Speaking on a personal level, I can tell you, as a woman driving from time to time alone, I certainly recognize the fear that people have in having someone approach their car, at night particularly.

This is not the way it should be in Canada. There is no justifiable reason for someone to be soliciting for money in this aggressive way. Our government agrees. We have listened to the public and our police, and we have acted.

In the Blueprint, we committed to giving police the power to crack down on squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling. We reiterated our commitment in the speech from the throne, and on November 2 we introduced the Safe Streets Act, 1999, which proposes workable tools to deal with these problems.

The Safe Streets Act would close a loophole in the Highway Traffic Act. This act stops people from entering a roadway to stop a vehicle, but squeegeeing takes place when cars are already stopped. Under the Safe Streets Act, the Highway Traffic Act would be amended to make it an offence to enter the roadway to stop, attempt to stop or approach a motor vehicle to offer, sell or provide any product or service to the driver or anyone else in the vehicle. Of course, towing and other emergency services would be exempt. Several new provincial offences would be created, specifically, aggressive solicitation, including panhandling, such as threatening the person solicited with physical harm; blocking the path of the person solicited; soliciting while intoxicated by alcohol or drugs.

The new act will forbid solicitation of persons in situations where they cannot easily leave, such as bus stops and taxi stands, at automated teller machines, in parking lots or while getting in and out of a vehicle.

In the past, these practices have been tolerated. I'm pleased that once again our government is acting to address an issue of such importance to Ontarians.

Aggressive panhandling is not the only fear my constituents face. During my community forum on crime and prevention, several of my constituents expressed concern that they can no longer go to the park with their family for fear that their children or they themselves would be exposed to used condoms, syringes and broken glass in outdoor public places.

As a teacher, I have seen people dispose of these types of dangerous materials in the schoolyard. This was a cause of great concern for me and my former students. As someone who uses the public park regularly as an opportunity to enjoy such activities as walking and playing with my dogs, exposure to these types of materials is always a potential threat. Our schools and parks should be places of enjoyment, not places to avoid. This is why I'm very happy this bill has been brought forward. Our new legislation will place a ban on the disposal of these types of materials in these public places such as streets, parks and schoolyards.

Along with the public, our police have also asked us to move on this issue. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police passed a resolution at its 1998 annual general

meeting, calling on the government of Ontario to make squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling arrestable offences. The police are the ones on the front line every day, who put their lives on the line. For this, a great deal of thanks goes out to them. If necessary, the police can arrest offenders, if the officer believes an offence has been committed, to establish the identity of the person or to prevent continuation or repetition of the activity in cases where the offender ignores a warning not to repeat the offence. However, arrest is not the most desirable outcome. We are interested in helping individuals.

I've heard criticism from the opposition that this is an attempt to punish the poor. Nothing could be further from the truth. The intent of this legislation is to regulate the safe use of streets, sidewalks and other public places in Ontario. It is not criminal legislation. We are interested only in helping those who think they are trapped in this situation to find a more rewarding and appropriate environment. There is no future in being a squeegee kid. We recognize that many of these individuals are in need of help. Some may not be there by their own choosing or they are not aware that help is available.

This is why we have given a range of options for the police to follow for each particular case. Our new changes will help them in their job to serve and protect by expanding the range of responses available to police. Depending on the situation, an officer could warn the person engaged in unsafe activities; ticket offenders; summon the offender to attend court; contact child and family services if the person is under 16 years of age; issue a warning; advise that conduct may be an offence and future infractions could result in a charge; or contact the appropriate social service or psychiatric treatment agencies.

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What this means is that now our police officers have the power to intervene and direct squeegee people to the many programs set up to help them, and there are many programs that can put them on the road to independence and a better life. Many of those whom we refer to as squeegee kids are of school age or dropouts from school. With this intervention, we can help these people get back.

Everyone agrees that only through education can a young person find a stable and satisfying future. Education is the key to their future. Once these people are back in school, there are many programs designed to help them get a job upon graduation. The Ontario youth apprenticeship program offers Ontario secondary school students the opportunity to train as registered apprentices while enrolled in school. It allows a student to complete his Ontario secondary school diploma and to gain apprenticeship training towards a certificate of qualification with journey person status in a skilled trade.

Some are young, school-aged parents who have dropped out of the education system and are forced to rely on welfare. Now they can join the Learning, Earning and Parenting program, or LEAP, which is being implemented across Ontario. This program provides support and incentives to young parents so they can stay in

school. For those individuals and single parents and couples aged 18 to 21 on welfare, they are subject to Ontario Works requirements. Ontario Works can provide employment training and help them find a job. For those who have not completed high school, they can have the opportunity to enter the high school equivalency test program or general education development. This test is recognized as being equivalent to Ontario secondary school graduation. I am sure you will agree that a good education is a passport to a better future.

Many squeegee people are homeless. Our government is working to help them. Ontario spends more than \$2 billion every year to help people who are homeless or are at risk of becoming so. Provincial initiatives support affordable housing, supportive housing for people with mental illness and community supports. Ontario is committed to working with other levels of government, communities, not-for-profit groups and the private sector to help those who are homeless now and to prevent homelessness in the future.

We are also aware that some people may need help simply because they are disabled. The Ontario disability support program creates employment supports that recognize that people with disabilities want to work and can work. We can help people with disabilities prepare for, get and keep a job. The specific supports can include employment planning, training, job placement and assistance with the cost of technical aids.

We are also very aware that many panhandlers are in need of medical help. We are responding to the needs of these people. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is undertaking a review and revision of mental health law to ensure that people who endanger themselves and others can get the care they need. Approximately \$16.3 million in total was allocated in 1998 to fund 24 assertive community treatment teams to provide services for people who are severely mentally ill.

We are leaving it to the discretion of the crown attorney, who can decide if any offender should be directed to mental health intervention programs. In Hamilton, Windsor, Peel, Toronto, York, Durham, Ottawa and Kenora, offenders can tailor a course of treatment to follow and complete. Treatment programs are designed in conjunction with a psychiatrist or mental health service.

The point of safe streets is not only to stop innocent people from being harassed on the street but also to take people out of the misery of the street, through police intervention, and place them into a more meaningful existence. Unfortunately, sometimes a stronger deterrent is necessary to persuade people that such behaviour is not in their best interests nor is it acceptable in civilized society.

Under our proposed changes, the courts would have the power to sentence offenders to the following sentences: for a first conviction, a fine of up to \$500; alternatively, they can impose a sentence of probation. For a repeat conviction, the court can levy a fine of up to \$1,000, probation or imprisonment up to six months. Probation orders could include a number of conditions:

not repeating the offence; community service; restitution or participation in training programs; drug or alcohol counselling if the offender is willing.

We believe that comparable offences such as trespassing have similar arrest powers. The maximum fine for a first offence is \$500 and \$1,000 for repeat offences. The fine for panhandling in Vancouver is between \$100 and \$2,000, and in Winnipeg it is up to \$1,000. Yet even here this bill allows for flexibility in order to address the best interests of the accused. The Safe Streets Act gives the trained professionals of the court the power to make the final decision about what penalty to impose for each situation. The judge may take into account the convicted person's financial status before determining the sentence. Imprisonment is available as a sentencing option for repeat offences and is a penalty for breach of probation.

Although it is Toronto that is assumed to be the main focus of this bill, in fact this is a problem in other areas of Ontario. Several communities across the province have noted their concerns about squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling and other aggressive solicitation. Some, including Ottawa, have passed bylaws to help deal with these problems. There are reports of these problems from Ottawa, Kingston, Oshawa, Toronto, Hamilton and London. This new bill would be available to assist all Ontario municipalities.

Municipal bylaws are limited. While they result in offenders receiving tickets, they do not allow for arrest or imprisonment. The province was asked to provide tougher means of dealing with the problem. It has responded by introducing legislation that will give police and the courts tools to help ensure the safe use of the streets. The bill is only one element of our government's broad effort to make our towns and cities safer places to live and raise families.

I have heard some of the opposition complain that this would criminalize the Girl Guides and the Boy Scouts. If the opposition actually reads the act, they will find that nothing could be further from the truth. It is very clear what constitutes a crime. Certainly the difference between aggressive panhandlers and Boy Scouts is apparent to all. In fact, as the Premier noted yesterday, it is an insult to the public and our police to suggest they can't distinguish between someone breaking the law and someone involved in charity fundraising.

Our government continues to support and encourage all those charities that work so hard on worthy causes to solicit in a non-aggressive manner. The bill does not stop legal charities from soliciting on sidewalks.

It is no surprise that the opposition has a problem with this important bill. As Mr McGuinty stated in a Queen's Park scrum after the throne speech on October 21, "They"—the squeegee people—"are at most a nuisance." Talking to my constituents in my crime and prevention community forum, I can tell you that Ontarians understand this is more than a nuisance.

The member from St Paul's stated on October 2 to the Toronto Star, "Within a civil society, you should be able to walk the streets and not be harassed." Again, the

member from Eglinton-Lawrence, himself a victim of aggressive panhandling, stated to the *Toronto Star* on June 21, 1996, "I am surprised and disappointed that Mr McGuinty seems indifferent to the experience of his own caucus colleague."

Again, on October 2, the member from St Paul's stated in the *Toronto Star*, "It's going to take some time to get people thinking of the Liberals as a law-and-order party." Ontarians have come to the same conclusion. That is why we were re-elected to lead Ontario in the 21st century.

Ontario residents have asked us to do something. Police, businesspeople, mayors, community members have asked us to do something. We have listened, and we have introduced the Safe Streets Act. It is all part of being a responsible and a responsive government.

It is clear, when you look at this piece of legislation, that it is balanced; it is providing safety to our citizens on the one hand and options to the police on the other to treat a serious issue. We have put in place the various mechanisms through the work of various other ministries to provide the network of safety for those people who find themselves in this position, and it is further evidence of our commitment to make sure that Ontario is the best place to live, work and raise a family.

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Mr Bradley: One of the problems that we have in the province is the fact that there are many people who are former psychiatric patients who don't have an opportunity to be treated appropriately. Many of the people we see on the streets who are supposedly panhandling or are street people are people who have been thrust into a system where they thought—and it might have been well-meaning at the time—that in fact there were services in the community to deal with them. There was a great move—it was a fad to a certain extent—to deinstitutionalization, as though we were talking about the old movie of many years ago called *The Snake Pit*, which depicted a psychiatric institution in a very unfavourable manner. It may have been accurate, but it was unfavourable in those days. When we deinstitutionalized, when we took people out of the institutions and put them back into the communities, we didn't have the appropriate supports that are there.

I look at this as a problem across the country and in many jurisdictions, not simply in Ontario. I think what we have to do is provide services for those people. In some cases, it may well mean going back to a psychiatric hospital to receive appropriate treatment. I don't consider that a negative. I consider that a positive in some cases. In other cases, it's simply enhancing the treatments that are available in the community.

You talk to the people who have manic-depressive people in their family, or they might have paranoid schizophrenics in their family, and those people are beside themselves because they know that the person might hurt themselves or hurt somebody else. Yet they feel helpless. They call our offices and they feel helpless. I would like to see a bill which would deal with that

before we get into dealing with this legislation. I think that would be very appropriate.

Mr Christopherson: In regard to the comments made by the member from North York—is that correct?—I noted in her speech that, like a number of other Tory members, there's an attempt to portray those of us who disagree with this legislation as somehow being soft on that very narrow part of the issue that's being dealt with that quite frankly can be of concern. I find that particularly insulting because I don't buy the argument that legislators are inherently soft on crime or tough on crime. I think all of us, by virtue of being elected, knocking on doors, being in our ridings, understand the element of crime in society and its relationship with people's lifestyle or quality of life and how it impacts on their families, which is exactly why we oppose this in the fashion that it's being put forward.

I know that the member from North York doesn't like the idea that we're saying it's a criminal law solution to a social problem, but that really is the way we see it. The fact of the matter is that you have cut out so many supports from our society, cut back in so many areas—"Yes," I say to the Deputy Speaker as he shakes his head and says, "No." You cannot cut the kind of money that you have out of our system. You can't take 22% of the income of the poor. Boy, I know what would happen if somebody said they were going to take 22% of your pay, but it was OK for you to support a measure that took 22% of the income away from the poorest of the poor.

Does this sort of thing answer all the problems? No, of course not. But is it a large, fundamental part of why we have these kinds of growing social problems? Yes, it is, and it's only going to get worse, because you're planning to cut even more.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to stand and compliment the member from York North and her very insightful comments with respect to Bill 8. I think it would be rather redundant to repeat and to expand on the comments she's made, but I can agree with her, and I can also agree with the Attorney General, the Honourable Jim Flaherty from Whitby-Ajax. This is long overdue.

We all as members know—I can only speak for my riding. The police association from Durham region is here, along with the Police Association of Ontario, seeking the support of the government to bring some law and order, some semblance of order, to the streets and the communities of this province. In response to that, this measure and also the pursuit issue that was dealt with yesterday are indications that this government is prepared to make the difficult decisions in the interest of safety in our communities.

Just today I received a memo from the Canadian Automobile Association, which has come out in full support of this particular legislation, Bill 8. Out of respect, I'm going to quote from David Leonhardt from the Canadian Automobile Association. "Whether a person is wielding a squeegee or pamphlets for the most worthwhile cause, he or she should not be permitted to become

a safety hazard on a public roadway." Who could disagree with that? The oversimplified version is that safety is in all of our best interests. "It is a dangerous intrusion into traffic," to quote Mr Leonhardt.

The member from York North covered most of the salient points of Bill 8. The viewers watching tonight should support this bill.

Mrs McLeod: With deference to the member from York North, I had to feel as I listened to her that she was describing the government that she wished she was a part of rather than the government that she actually is a part of. In fact, she was describing what she would hope this bill could be about, or at least why the bill could be justified, that is, because her government really is dealing with the underlying problems rather than simply trying to get squeegee kids off the street.

I think the member actually wishes perhaps that her government was doing something about homelessness. But those of us on this side of the House would be absolutely amazed to find out just exactly what it is the government is doing, because to the best of our knowledge all they've done with homeless situations is to cancel all social housing projects, and now to turn the responsibility for any existing social housing over to the municipalities, absolutely relieving themselves of any responsibility for dealing with the homeless situation at all.

I think this member actually was hoping that the government was doing something about mental health. She believes her government when they're talking about treatment programs for people who are addicts, for example. I think she's forgotten that this is the same government that intends to close about 3,000 mental health beds and that really has not put any community alternatives in place, apart from a couple of community assertive action teams across the province.

This member may even think along the lines of our leader this afternoon, when he said that if this government had real priorities for real people, they might be prepared to deal with the 200,000 kids who are being neglected because of this government's total inability to deal with the Family Responsibility Office chaos which they've created, rather than dealing with the 200 squeegee kids in Toronto that this bill addresses.

This member might even want to take issue with her government's own throne speech, where it says that they want to deal with real people, and they define real people as being only hard-working, tax-paying people. They don't see the squeegee kids or any of the homeless or any of the mentally ill as being real, and that's why they don't deal with them—

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The Acting Speaker: Thank you. In response?

Mrs Munro: I'd like to thank the member from St Catharines, the member from Hamilton West, the member from Durham and the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

In responding to a couple of the comments that were made, I want to make it very clear to the members opposite, who seem to question the validity of the comments I

made in relation to the programs that are here, that in fact these are real programs and they are real supports that are there.

The other thing to understand is that this piece of legislation gives both the police and the courts these options. I want to make that clear. When the member for St Catharines talked particularly about those people who have mental illness, this is clearly the opportunity for both the police and the courts to make appropriate responses. In the Blueprint document, we made a commitment that we wanted to be able to make sure that for those people who present a danger to themselves or to others, the legal framework is there to make sure they aren't in a position to become that danger.

To the member for Hamilton West, I enunciated those programs that are in place, that do provide opportunities for those people to step out of the kinds of situations which may have taken them down that path. I think the opposition needs to look at this piece of legislation within the context, as I did, of all of our programs.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sergio: I'm delighted to stand in the House and take whatever time I can. It's very difficult to have a few minutes on any particular topic, but I'm delighted to join the members in the House in addressing this particular issue.

The bill as it has been presented by the government proposes to do three very particular, distinct things, all of them, I have to say, already within existing legislation, either provincial, federal or incorporated in the various municipal bylaws. There is absolutely nothing new in this proposed legislation that is strictly brand new, previously non-existent, from the provincial government.

What does the provincial government propose? It proposes a new set of offences. What can they be, those new offences? Jumping in front of cars? Well, no one, Mr Silly—Mr Silly, yes indeed—would be so silly as to jump in front of a moving vehicle. Shall we refer to the Premier as Mr Silly? I don't think that any panhandler or any so-called squeegee kid would jump in front of a moving vehicle.

Illegal solicitation: Where would that take place? In a telephone booth? I don't think so. In a bank? I don't think so. In Toronto, for example, all the bus shelters have one entrance and one exit. I don't think the members have taken that into account. I don't think so.

If you were to approach someone on a sidewalk, would that be impeding somebody else's passageway? I don't think so. So where does the government with this new bill come up and say that in any particular place where it's easy access to another person, it's impeded? If you were a panhandler, would you go in such a place? I don't think so. I can tell the members on the other side where you would find some of them: maybe in front of a church on a Sunday morning where you may just be praying on some very—

Interjection: Don't give them ideas like that.

Mr Sergio: I won't give them any ideas. But this has happened to me. That's where you would find them. You

wouldn't find them in front of a bank teller. That's where you would go and find perhaps one of those particular people.

But I have to tell you this. They think it's very funny. For the first time, I saw a homeless person all the way up on Yonge and Steeles—unheard of. Why? Because we have too many already within the city of Toronto. That is why.

It is typical of this government to pass legislation, to introduce legislation very disruptively, if I may say, without thinking. If they were to say, "All right, we're going to pass the legislation but we are going to have in place something else for these people," some other infrastructure, you may want to call it—there is absolutely nothing in place once this legislation comes into play to take care of those kids. Where would those kids go?

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: Oh, you wouldn't know. Of course, this is the typical reaction we get from Mr Harris and his government. Where would those kids go? Is there anything else to put in place once they displace the so-called squeegee kids? There is nothing about this so-called aggressive legislation. But everything is progressive in this particular piece of legislation. There are no programs for addictions. All the panhandlers out there, they are not strictly panhandling or squeegee kids, whatever. There are people out there who are very, very sick. There is nothing in this proposed piece of legislation on how they will be dealing with those types of people.

Mental health is a serious problem out there. It's not their choice. It's not solely homeless people lying on the streets or passing the night under a bridge, stuff like that. Those people are sick people, and there is nothing in place that this government is putting out there to look after those people. The member from North York says, "We are looking after the homeless people." I haven't seen anything coming out of this government to deal with that particular issue.

What other programs do they have for those people? Have they come out with, say, "Oh, we're going to put in a couple of million dollars and maybe a work program, come up with some jobs, work with industry." Nothing to deal with those particular people. Is there any counselling? Is there an information office? There is absolutely nothing. Oh yes, there are some offices where they are given some counselling. But they just cannot deal with the numbers that are out there. These people think it's a joke, that they're going to be disposing of a couple of hundred squeegee kids. Where are they going to go? "I don't know."

We're just moving them around. But they are doing nothing in the meantime. They think it's funny. But there's nothing funny to those kids out there. I don't think they are making millions of dollars. What other mechanism are they putting in place to deal with the kids, with this particular situation here? Absolutely nothing.

My colleague was saying before that this piece of legislation has a total aura, it belongs as a prime candidate in the red tape legislation. I would make my consideration and suggest indeed to Mr Harris to pass it along to the members of the red tape legislation committee and disband it. Don't even send this further. But if they should choose to, then let's debate it properly. It doesn't belong anywhere else. But if it should, then let's have a proper debate on this particular issue.

Whatever they are doing, especially within the city of Toronto—and I know that they read the newspapers as well. It falls with the city of Toronto. You know what they are saying? That the debts within the city of Toronto will double in the next couple of years. Can you imagine the city of Toronto having \$2.3 billion in debt within four years? Can you imagine? It's your fault. It's your government. It's all the downloading that you've been doing on the city of Toronto.

It's very unfortunate that they are taking the situation so lightly. While we need money for infrastructure, you guys are doing nothing. We need money for new subway lines. They are doing nothing. We need money for maintenance, for roads, for bridges, for new construction. These people are not doing anything. Do you know who has to absorb all of that? The local municipalities. And do you know what happens when the local municipalities have to absorb that? They increase taxes. And do you know what happens when they increase taxes? The poor suckers out there—pardon me—the poor homeowners, the seniors, they are the ones who will feel the brunt of those acts. That's what happens.

Do I have an extra couple of minutes, Mr Speaker, since I want to wrap it up? I would try and get on for another couple of minutes.

My friends on the other side have totally confused principles when it comes to dealing with squeegee kids in the city of Toronto. I'm not a fan, I should say. I don't like it myself when I see squeegee kids approaching an intersection, but I have no fear, I have no problem. I lock my windows, I lock my doors and I say, "No, thank you very much," and I never have a problem.

Interjections.

Mr Sergio: I hope I can continue this tomorrow, Mr Speaker.

I never have a problem, unless they can provide otherwise. I would continue very willingly to say either, "Yes, go ahead and do it," and I'll give them a quarter or whatever, or, "No, thank you very much." I've never had a problem with that.

So if they want to—is my time up?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

The House adjourned at 2132.

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Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Dan (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinity, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Thunder Bay- Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnot, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing- Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 37^e législature

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Wednesday 17 November 1999

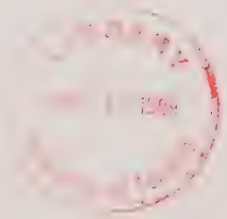
Mercredi 17 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

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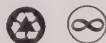
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 November 1999

*The House met at 1334.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): As both children's critic and human rights critic for the official opposition, I am pleased to stand today and give special recognition to National Child Day.

The government of Canada designated November 20 as National Child Day to commemorate two historic United Nations events: (1) the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child on November 20, 1959, and (2) the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on November 20, 1989.

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the creation of National Child Day as a special day just for children reflects the growing recognition that children are important and valued members of our society.

National Child Day does something else too, something simple. It recognizes children just for being themselves. It reminds us that children need love and respect and stimulation to grow to their full potential. It's a day to listen to children, to marvel at their uniqueness and all they have to offer us.

A key objective of National Child Day, 1999, is to increase awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This year is extra special because it marks the 10th anniversary. Since its adoption by the United Nations on November 20, 1989, the convention has been signed and ratified by more countries than any other international treaty. Over the past decade, the convention has proved to be a valuable tool for promoting the rights of children everywhere around the world.

GALLAHER PAPER MILL

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to inform the Legislature that on November 12, Ernst and Young and TD Bank found a buyer who intends to run the Gallaher paper mill in Thorold. This news was greeted with celebrations from the 310 workers and their families at this plant, the residents of Thorold and the entire Niagara region.

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 novembre 1999

A tremendous amount of effort and time went into trying to convince Ernst and Young and TD Bank to select a buyer who would run the plant. The reopening of the plant shows what can be done when governments, unions, businesses and local communities work together towards a common goal of economic development, growth and job creation.

Many individuals and organizations were involved in assuring that Gallaher remains in production. I would like to thank Premier Harris for his intervention in the matter. After I spoke to the Premier on October 19, the Premier immediately contacted Ernst and Young officials and encouraged them to select a bidder who would run the plant.

I also want to thank economic development and trade minister, Al Palladini, for diligently impressing on TD Bank our government's desire to see the plant operating again.

In addition, I would like to thank Thorold mayor Tim Kenny for all of his Herculean efforts in this matter.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the workers at Gallaher and Mike Lambert of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union for their hard work. Your patience and determination have paid off. Everyone in this deal, from the Premier to the Gallaher workers, should be proud of their efforts.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): In 1996, the Harris government cancelled Ontario welcome houses, a recommended referral agency for newcomers. Three years ago it also cancelled the Anti-Racism Secretariat. Then this government reduced funding for English-as-a-second-language programs which were designed to speed up a working knowledge of English in order to get employment. The government then cancelled publication of books designed to help newcomers access jobs in trades and professions.

Today we find out that the Harris government plans to cut \$800 million from education. This of course would mean the death of basic literacy and English-language education to adult immigrants.

This government seems hell-bent on destroying the infrastructure of services to immigrants. When immigrants settle here, they wish especially to participate in the economic activity of Ontario. They don't want welfare; they want jobs, but in order to get them they need basic tools to participate: English-language literacy

and orientation to where the jobs are, and training. To cut these orientation programs is penny wise and pound foolish because it postpones their contribution to our economy.

The Liberals urge that this government rethink its ill-thought-out proposal to cut \$800 million from education and consequently eliminate and decimate dozens of programs—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm sorry, the member's time has expired.

1340

FIRE SAFETY AWARDS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): Yesterday I had the opportunity to congratulate a fine member of the Perth-Middlesex community, Ms Joan Nichol of Ailsa Craig, at the fire safety awards ceremony.

Ms Nichol joined the Ailsa Craig and district fire department in 1991. Since then, she has given countless hours of her time to educate a wide range of individuals and groups in the community. Among other things, Ms Nichol organized fire safety displays, fire safety house visits and school poster contests. She delivered presentations to many groups, including children and older adults.

Although Ms Nichol left the fire department earlier this year, she continues to give her time to teach fire safety. Ms Nichol is one of 20 individuals and organizations in our province to receive a fire safety award this year. It's always a pleasure to thank the brave men and women who help protect our homes and businesses from the threat of fire.

At this time I would also like to thank all the brave firefighters who helped put out a five-alarm fire in my hometown of Listowel. Luckily, this fire took no lives but it did destroy seven buildings in our downtown core.

My community came together during this blaze as downtown businesses opened their doors to firefighters, whose wet clothing turned to ice in the cold November air. Local merchants, the Salvation Army and residents brought drinks, clothing, dry mitts and hot soup to firefighters recovering from fighting the blaze. I am proud to represent these people in this Legislature.

DIMITRI "MATTI" BARANOVSKI

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I've just returned from the funeral of 15-year-old Dimitri "Matti" Baranovski, an honour roll grade 11 student at Northview Heights collegiate in my riding.

Matti was born in Kharkov, Ukraine, and at age 6 moved to Israel. Two years ago his mother, Olga, anxious to keep her only son from harm's way, decided to bring him to the safe haven of Canada.

Last Sunday, Matti, doing what teenagers do, was hanging out with a group of his friends in a park that was within sight of his home. He was set upon by a group of

older youths demanding cigarettes and spare change and in an ensuing struggle was beaten and kicked to death.

The funeral chapel was filled to overflowing by Matti's fellow students and members of the public who were too numb to comprehend the event they were witnessing. How do you explain the unexplainable or make sense of the senseless? The uncontrolled sobbing of the students, most of whom were experiencing their first confrontation with the death of a friend or loved one, the sight of the stark coffin brought home to all the enormity of the problem that we all have to address.

Youth attacks are a major concern for Toronto police, who are reporting almost two swarmings a day. Experts say that it's just the tip of the iceberg, noting that school surveys continually show at least 50% of the attacks go unreported.

I know that all of us in this House wish to extend our condolences, our regrets and our prayers to the Baranovski family and hope that Matti's memory will be a source of comfort and blessing.

LIONS CLUBS

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It is my distinct honour to bring to the attention of the House two special anniversaries. The Lions Clubs of Glencoe and Parkhill, located in my riding, are celebrating 25 and 60 years of service to each of their respective communities.

Twenty-five years ago the Glencoe Lions first president, Ray Hooker, said, "Whenever there exists an urgent need, our Lions will perform the deed." Likewise, 60 years ago, H.L. Turner told the Parkhill Lions, "We must constantly endeavour, in keeping with Lions tradition, to be of service to the underprivileged and to the community as a whole."

In just the past 10 years, the Glencoe Lions have raised more than \$400,000 in support of summer and winter sports for boys and girls. I must point out that this is a community of 2,000 people. They have provided bursaries and travel expenses for students and they have hosted several exchange students from around the world. In 1989, with support from the provincial government, they opened a much-needed seniors housing complex that has enjoyed full occupancy ever since.

Not to be outdone, the Lions Club of Parkhill has provided eyeglasses free of charge, sent children to camp, financially supported the Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, the crippled children's fund and others too numerous to mention here. In addition, the Lions Club of Parkhill has also raised thousands of dollars towards the cost of the Parkhill Community Centre and most recently provided funding for major renovations and improvements to the town's park.

Because volunteers like those in the Lions Clubs care, the lives of many in rural Ontario are richer and fuller. In closing, I certainly would like to recognize the contribution that those two Lions Clubs have made in their respective communities.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Here's a children's story for the House today.

There once was an outrageous Ontario Premier who said he loved schoolchildren. This Premier decided one day he was going to show families how much he cared. "I'm going to put kids first," he said. Then, with a down-home, friendly grin, he picked up a freshly sharpened axe and hacked \$1 billion from the education system.

He then said, "There is more work to be done." So he took away services from special needs children, leaving kids at home and parents frantic. Soon, he established a one-size-fits-all funding formula that resulted in school closures. "This is the icing on the cake," he exclaimed.

In reaction to the resulting furor, he smiled and said, "But we are putting kids first," as school boards across the province scrambled, scrimped and cut to try to make ends meet.

He also decided to demonstrate the rewards of earning a buck. He got elementary school kids to sell chocolate bars and other products so that they could purchase textbooks, computers and other supplies. "This is a wonderful hands-on experience," he said. "This way, our kids will be prepared to accept low-paying, dead-end jobs right after high school," because they can't afford to go to university or to college.

But the Premier didn't stop here. Today he said: "We plan to cut \$800 million more from education and literacy programs, from special education, from universities. Heck, what's another \$800 million from education?"

There was dead silence. Ontario students didn't live happily ever after.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Today I'm pleased to rise to share with the House the results of a very important study that was commissioned by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. This report is called *Reclaiming a Vision: Making Long-Term-Care Community Services Work*.

I was fascinated in reading the report. Much has been talked about in this Legislature of concerns that we have, as members of the opposition, on behalf of our constituents with problems with the long-term-care system. I believe that on many occasions we have pointed out how cuts to hospitals have meant that more and more people are being released from hospitals quicker and sicker, that they are using up more and more of the home care budget that has been allocated by the province. So more of that money, which had been intended to support long-term-care services in the community—chronic care, to help people remain well and stay in their homes, live with independence, live with dignity—is going to subacute care, to people who are being released from hospital.

That's one thing when we say it, but now we've got the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario's report finding exactly that. They have some really interesting

critiques of the government's program. First and foremost, they find that the program does not meet the vision that consumers have put out. I think most importantly, they find that the government's managed competition, bringing the private sector in, has meant less care, less quality of care, less accessibility of care.

It's a wake-up call to the government. I hope they pay attention.

1350

HANOVER WEB SITE

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): A new project announced by this government recently is a perfect match for many of the communities in my riding of Bruce-Grey. The \$11.5 million to be invested by the province, Bell Canada and two public sector partners will extend high-speed data services to 270 communities, including six in my riding.

One of the shining examples of how a community is using the Net to enhance its profile is Hanover. From its Web site, residents and visitors alike can find out everything they need to know about this pretty town, from its regional aquatic centre, which offers programs suitable for any age, to the Hanover and District Hospital or the Hanover Raceway. Within its fine stately homes and modern subdivisions, the town is poised for progress and profit, and its commitment to business growth and promotion is strong and unwavering.

Surrounded by green farmland and fresh air, Hanover supports an energetic business community while offering all the comforts of community life: community living, but connected to the world by up-to-date, modern technology. This is truly a town that's on-line, ready for business and proud to strut its stuff.

Hanover has benefited from the Web and now, with this new provincial initiative, more communities in my riding will be able to follow their exciting example.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): For the members' benefit, in the members' east gallery today we have a former member, Howard Sheppard, the member for Northumberland who was here during the 32nd and 33rd parliaments. I would like all the members to join in welcoming him.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent of the House to wear red ribbons in support of Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Today they launched their red ribbon campaign, and I leave that with the House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TOWN OF PICKERING ACT, 1999

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr7, An Act respecting The Corporation of the Town of Pickering.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

GASOLINE PRICING ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999

SUR LE PRIX DE L'ESSENCE

Mr Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act respecting the price of gasoline /
Projet de loi 16, Loi concernant le prix de l'essence.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The bill, which is strictly within provincial jurisdiction, prohibits the sale of gasoline at retail for a price that is lower than the cost to a retailer of purchasing and reselling gasoline. That is, it prevents predatory pricing by major oil companies of independents.

LOI SUR LES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES ACT

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Minister of Community and Social Services on a point of order.

L'hon John R. Baird (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones): Et des Affaires francophones.

Je veux demander le consentement unanime pour un représentant de chaque parti politique de faire un discours à l'occasion du 10^e anniversaire de la mise en oeuvre de la Loi sur les services en français.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

L'hon M. Baird : C'est avec grand plaisir que je souligne aujourd'hui le 10^e anniversaire de la mise en oeuvre de la Loi sur les services en français.

La Loi sur les services en français a vu le jour en 1986. C'était le résultat des efforts de beaucoup de monde, des efforts qui avaient commencé au début des années 70 par la nomination d'un Coordonnateur du bilinguisme pour le gouvernement ontarien, des efforts qui ont continué, notamment sous l'ancien premier ministre Bill Davis quand il a créé le Bureau du coordonnateur provincial des services en français en 1977, et des efforts qui ont été poursuivis; par la suite, par d'autres partis au pouvoir.

La Loi sur les services en français a commencé son vrai rôle pendant la même semaine il y a 10 ans, en 1989.

Dans 23 régions désignées de la province, les francophones peuvent avoir des services en français de leur gouvernement provincial. Il y a 185 agences de services

sociaux, de santé et de services juridiques qui sont désignées pour donner des services en français aux gens de l'Ontario.

Depuis, les acquis se sont multipliés. Il y a maintenant cinq centres de santé communautaires francophones à Cornwall, Hamilton-Wentworth, New Liskeard, Sudbury et Toronto.

Ça faisait très longtemps que les francophones de l'Ontario demandaient le pouvoir de gérer leurs propres écoles. Eh bien, ce gouvernement, le gouvernement Harris, a créé 12 nouveaux conseils scolaires de langue française, des conseils scolaires autonomes avec un financement équitable, partout dans la province pour la première fois. Il y a une télévision éducative en français dont les productions soutiennent les programmes scolaires.

Aujourd'hui, en 1999, la qualité de la vie des Franco-Ontariens est meilleure.

Je veux souligner aussi le travail de toute la fonction publique de la province de l'Ontario qui a contribué à la mise en oeuvre de la loi, particulièrement les coordonnateurs des services en français dans les ministères, les communicateurs bilingues et tous ceux et celles qui donnent des services directs aux francophones dans toute la province.

Je veux aussi remercier le personnel de l'Office des affaires francophones pour son travail pas toujours facile de coordination, de surveillance, d'éducation publique, de liaison avec la communauté francophone et aussi de conseiller au sein du gouvernement provincial.

Je suis très fier d'être le ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones et de pouvoir me réjouir avec tous les francophones de la province. En Ontario, on a la majorité de la population francophone hors Québec dans ce pays, et notre province est une meilleure place à cause de la grande population franco-ontarienne, une population très dynamique dans toute la province.

La provision de services en français est importante pour notre gouvernement et aussi pour notre province.

The Speaker : Further comments?

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : Je remercie le ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones d'avoir demandé le consentement unanime afin de souligner le 10^e anniversaire de l'entrée en vigueur de la Loi 8 sur les services en français.

Après 10 ans d'existence, il est temps d'en faire une évaluation, d'examiner ses forces et ses faiblesses et de proposer des améliorations.

La Loi sur les services en français garantit le droit de recevoir des services en français par le gouvernement provincial, et ce dans 23 régions désignées. La présence francophone en Ontario remonte à plus de 350 ans. La population francophone de l'Ontario constitue la plus grande communauté francophone canadienne hors Québec.

The French Language Services Act, which came into effect on November 19, 1989, was passed unanimously in this Legislature on November 18, 1986. This unanimous support expressed the government and opposition

parties' commitment to recognize the contribution which the French-speaking population has made to our province's historical, cultural and linguistic heritage and their wish to preserve that contribution for future generations.

1400

Présentement, les francophones de l'Ontario contribuent pleinement à l'essor de la province, à tous les points de vue, que ce soit culturel, social, juridique, économique ou politique, pour faire de notre société ontarienne une force sur la scène mondiale.

La loi a vu la création de l'Office des affaires francophones, un outil clé pour assurer le succès, pour assurer l'atteinte des objectifs de la Loi sur les services en français. Malheureusement l'Office, comme tous les autres ministères et agences gouvernementales, a subi au cours des dernières années des coupures budgétaires très importantes et compte de moins en moins de coordonnateurs de services.

Pourtant, nous avons des attentes très élevées face à l'Office. Elle se devait d'être notre chien de garde. Elle est devenue notre chien de salon. On se doit de lui redonner les moyens pour remplir pleinement son mandat pour devenir plus efficace.

The French Language Services Act does not place any obligation on a municipality to offer services in French. Section 16 of the act does, however, allow municipalities within designated areas to provide services in French if their council so desires.

Avec le transfert des services gouvernementaux aux municipalités, les francophones se sont vus retiré des services qu'ils recevaient depuis l'adoption de la Loi 8. Il est temps que la Loi 8 reprenne de son mordant.

Comme vous l'a rappelé le père de la Loi 8, M. Grandmaître, en juin 1998, notre communauté n'a pas les moyens de perdre les quelques services sociaux et de santé de première ligne dont nous jouissons. Nous n'avons pas non plus les moyens de perdre notre temps à nous battre pour sauver nos services pièce par pièce. Pourquoi ne pas agir? Pourquoi ne pas garantir aux francophones de l'Ontario qu'ils vont bénéficier des mêmes services? Pourquoi ne pas inclure ces garanties dans la Loi sur les services en français?

Following the municipal restructuring process, can the government guarantee to Franco-Ontarians that it will put in place a process and the funds to ensure the retention of existing services and programs in French and to improve the delivery of these services?

Je crois que les contribuables francophones ont le droit d'exiger dans ce contexte de réforme le droit de communiquer et de recevoir les services gouvernementaux dans la langue de préférence du contribuable. Cette loi se doit de retrouver son efficacité. Elle se doit d'être améliorée. C'est une question de respect. C'est une question de bon sens.

Les Ontariens et les Ontariennes, peu importe leur langue, s'attendent à ce que nous, qui les représentons, oeuvrons pour une société où règnent les valeurs qui nous sont chères, telles la justice, l'équité et le respect, et que

ces valeurs soient traduites en législation et en programmes gouvernementaux.

So I leave the minister responsible for francophone affairs with this thought: The French-speaking communities in Ontario want to be part of the solution. We no longer want to be statistics.

Je précise à ce gouvernement que nous, Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, ne voulons plus n'être que des statistiques. Nous voulons être valorisés en contribuant activement à l'élaboration d'une solution juste et équitable qui assurera le plein respect de nos droits.

M^{me} Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt) : Dès sa mise en application en 1989, la Loi sur les services en français donnait aux Ontariens et Ontariennes la possibilité de recevoir une vaste gamme de services gouvernementaux dans leur langue. La Loi 8 représentait également un symbole important pour toute la communauté francophone de l'Ontario, reconnaissant son rôle historique et son dynamisme actuel. Le fait que les trois partis présents à l'Assemblée aient donné leur appui unanime à cette loi envoyait un message clair : les francophones ont leur place en Ontario.

Comme gouvernement, les néo-démocrates se sont appliqués à étendre la portée de la Loi sur les services en français dans tous les secteurs du gouvernement. Nous avons créé plusieurs nouveaux centres de santé communautaires francophones, par exemple, à Sudbury et à Longlac.

Une fois l'implantation de la Loi 8 sur la bonne voie, il a fallu aller plus loin. Nous avons renforcé le réseau de collèges communautaires avec l'ouverture du Collège Boréal à Sudbury et du Collège des Grands Lacs, et le financement de nouveaux programmes dans les collèges existants.

Nous avons modifié la Loi sur les coopératives de crédit pour aider les communautés francophones à former leur Caisse populaire.

Il est donc devenu plus facile de vivre en français en Ontario. Mais le gouvernement conservateur nous a fait réaliser à quel point ces réalisations sont fragiles.

Ce gouvernement s'est mis à transférer des services aux municipalités sans s'assurer que les programmes continueront d'être offerts en français. Nous avons réussi à obtenir quelques engagements pour la protection des services en français l'année dernière, mais jusqu'à maintenant il semble que dans plusieurs communautés les Franco-Ontariens risquent de perdre des services dans leur langue dans les domaines de la justice, du logement et de la santé communautaire.

Le gouvernement Harris essaie depuis deux ans de fermer la plupart des services de l'hôpital Montfort, le seul hôpital de l'Ontario à former des médecins et infirmières en français, des professionnels de la santé dont tout l'Ontario français besoin.

Voilà deux semaines, on apprenait que ce gouvernement a l'intention de couper le financement du collège d'agriculture d'Alfred, une précieuse institution d'enseignement et de recherche.

Et juste ce matin, on apprenait que les conservateurs s'apprêtent à couper l'éducation continue pour les francophones.

Les acquis de la Loi 8 doivent être mieux protégés et les services en français renforcés. Un bon commencement serait de continuer de reconnaître cette journée importante à l'Assemblée.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent on a motion that the assembly reaffirm its commitment to publicly funded universal health care and denounce the government of Ralph Klein for his move to privatize health care in Alberta.

You will know that last night Mr Klein announced plans to move to private delivery of health care throughout the province of Alberta. I am asking for unanimous consent that we pass a motion here today denouncing that direction.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Education. Today we learned of this government's real approach to public education in Ontario. It is both heartless and brainless, because anybody with any kind of a heart would not be attacking our deaf children, our blind children and our children who are suffering from severe learning disabilities.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Take your seat, please.

I apologize for the interruptions. I must remind our guests that there aren't any demonstrations, including applause, so I would ask that our guests kindly refrain from applause as well.

The leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Anybody with an intelligent approach to public education in Ontario would understand that as we struggle to establish ourselves in a knowledge-based global economy, we would not cut computers, we would not cut textbooks and we would not cut literacy programs.

Minister, you were very clear and your government was very clear during the course of the recent elections: You were going to stand up for public education. There would be no cuts to public education. You would deliver top-quality public education to Ontario's children. Tell us, how dare you put forward this kind of a plan that undermines public education and is going to hurt our children?

1410

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): We made some very clear commitments to the voters of this province: (1) that we would protect classroom funding and classroom spending; (2) that we would enhance it; it must rise to match enrolment; (3) we also told the voters of this province that we were going to continue to find savings in administration, waste in bureaucracy if we could, and that we were going to—

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I know the honourable members over there had some concerns about this—

The Speaker: The member for Kingston and the Islands, please come to order.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I would also like to caution the other member not to believe what he reads in the Toronto Star. Two weeks ago, we had another newspaper that had another story with another figure in it that said there wouldn't be anything happening to education. If that's the kind of research he wants to use—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member, take your seat. The member for Hamilton East is interrupting and he isn't sitting in his seat. I would ask him to come to order.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Our commitments on classroom spending remain. We made them very firmly and we stand by them.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you cannot deny that this is not merely a proposal, it is your plan. The very plan itself says that you are supposed to deny that you are making these cuts. Don't talk to me about classroom expenditures. I'm talking to you about textbooks; I'm talking to you about computers; I'm talking to you about literacy programs; I'm talking to you about ensuring that our children have everything they need inside the classroom so they can make of themselves a success later on. That's what I'm talking about. Those are the commitments you made during the course of the recent election campaign.

Again, I ask you on behalf of Ontario parents and their kids, how dare you put forward this kind of a proposal? Is it not your responsibility as the defender of public education to stand up and say there will be no more cuts to public education in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Perhaps the honourable member would like us to ignore where there's waste in the system and not take that dollar and put it into classroom spending. We said we were going to protect classroom spending. We are indeed doing that.

I would caution the honourable member that an article in the Toronto Star is not a plan from this government.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Ottawa Centre, please come to order. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: The minister's definition of waste inside public education has been made very clear. She thinks we should be making cuts to programs for our deaf children. We should be making cuts to programs for our blind children. We should be making cuts to programs

for our severely learning-disabled. We should be cutting back on computers. We should be cutting back on textbooks. That is this minister's definition of administrative waste found within public education. Well, we don't accept that. We reject that. We think those are essential programs and we think your job is to support these programs.

Again, Minister, on behalf of Ontario's children and their parents, how could you possibly put together this kind of a plan that attacks public education?

Hon Mrs Ecker: If the honourable member wants to think that a Toronto Star article is the government's plan, let him believe that, but that is not the government's plan. It is not the government's plan to cut services for the disabled and deaf and blind children. It is not the government's plan to spend less on textbooks. We're spending more on textbooks. We had an additional \$100 million for textbooks in elementary last time; we had an additional \$150 million for textbooks in secondary. We are spending more on classrooms. The Education Improvement Commission, in its recent interim report, also clearly showed that spending in the classroom was increasing while spending in administration was decreasing.

That is exactly the commitment we made to the people of Ontario. That commitment stands. There has been no change—

The Speaker: Take your seat. The member for Sudbury, please come to order. Is the minister done with her comments?

New question, leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: My second question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities, who must bear some responsibility for the preparation of this plan as well.

Today we learn about this government's real agenda when it comes to colleges and universities in Ontario. This is their four-part plan:

We learn that you are planning to move to a two-tiered, American-style, private university. We learn that you plan to close two thirds of Ontario's community colleges. We learn that you plan to steal from our students tens of millions of dollars being paid by the federal government. We learn that you will take hundreds of millions of dollars out of our colleges and our universities.

Minister, how can you claim to be a defender of the interests of Ontario's young people who are struggling to be able to afford post-secondary studies in Ontario, struggling to make something of themselves, struggling to find success in the new economy? How can you claim to be their defender when you put forward this kind of a plan?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to begin by saying, on behalf of Ontario's students and their parents, that if they believe everything you just said, they should be concerned. Even I did not read that in the Toronto Star, so that is bad enough.

I'd just like to say to this House, as we did during the campaign and as I have said in consultation with our students, the presidents of our colleges and universities and those who have taken the time to give us their best advice, that there will be a place for every qualified and motivated student who wishes to go to college and university in the province of Ontario.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Rich students, rich students.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The opposition says "rich" students. I would like to announce to this Legislative Assembly and to the people of Ontario that no government has helped poor students, students with need, to the extent that this government has done.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Ottawa Centre, this will be your last warning.

Sorry, Minister, were you finished?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: No, I'm not. I'd like to say that we will continue to assist students who need assistance in obtaining a university and college education.

Mr McGuinty: How quickly this minister is trying to put some distance between herself and this government's record. You took \$400 million out of Ontario's colleges and universities, you increased tuition fees by 60% and you deregulated tuition fees for professional programs. That's your record, without a doubt. There is no question about that whatsoever.

We have had a wonderful tradition in our province. It's one that says it doesn't matter how wealthy your parents are, that if you work hard and you get good marks, you get to go on to college or university. You're introducing this new concept: private, American-style university.

If you want to provide some assurance to this House today and to Ontario's parents and Ontario's young people, stand up right now and tell us that you have no plans whatsoever, assure us that the Mike Harris government will not be moving forward with any initiative to promote private, American-style universities in Ontario.

Interruption.

The Speaker: I have warned our guests. This will be the last warning. There can be no clapping and we cannot accept anybody yelling out. It's difficult to tell from my standpoint whether it's a member or somebody in the gallery. So I would ask the indulgence of the guests that you do not shout out, and if you do, I will have to have you removed.

Minister.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: It has been our government's plan from the very beginning to get rid of waste, overlap, duplication, administration within the college and university system. I'd also like to remind this Legislative Assembly that the university and college system has never been more accessible, in response to the question from the leader of the opposition party. We're always willing to make the system better. We have a record number of students from within Ontario attending our

university and college system and we have a record number of students coming from other provinces.

With regard to the question about private universities, the Liberals and the NDP, when they were in government, looked at all alternatives to make sure that their system was better. We are looking at all alternatives—

The Speaker: The minister's time is over. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: That answer is yes and that is completely unacceptable. To the Minister of Colleges and Universities, I would think that your very first responsibility is to defend the accessible systems that we have had developed over the years by our parents and our grandparents. It has been the Ontario way. The overwhelming majority of the members of the House have benefited from accessibility to our colleges and our universities.

So how dare you, Minister, claim as your record the establishment here in Ontario of American-style private universities? Tell us now that was just a slip, that there is no way we are ever going to have, on your watch, American-style private universities in Ontario.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: In just looking at the numbers on accessibility, I want to remind the member from the other side—

Interruptions.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask our guests to leave. Clear the gallery. The House is adjourned for a 10-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1422 to 1432.

The Speaker: I believe we were at a new question. New question; the leader of the third party.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. I have a transcript from an interview given by Mike Harris on Monday, November 15, at CFRB radio, where Lorrie Goldstein asked him a question about funding formulas for school boards, particularly the Toronto school board. He said, "You're going to give them more money?"

Mike Harris replied: "Yes, I think they need more money. Yes, we have to approach the federal government. Yes, they have to manage their own finances more. And yes, we're prepared to look at a whole level of flexibility of the funding formula."

Mr Goldstein: "So the province will be putting more money into it?"

Mike Harris: "The province will ensure the dollars are there that they need."

Now we find today a proposal to take yet another \$800 million, much of it centred on the large, urban school boards. Can you tell me, Deputy Premier, who was telling the truth? Mike Harris or your proposal?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Mr Speaker, through you to the leader of the third party, I think the Premier's comments speak for themselves.

Mr Hampton: I've got another document. This is from the Toronto District School Board. In fact, they're debating these cuts right now as we speak. They know they're going to have to cut \$216 million out of their budget. If they read your proposal, you take away their mitigation funding and they'll have to cut another \$272 million, for \$488 million: prep time, \$41 million; textbooks, \$7.4 million; classroom computers, \$7.2 million; child care, \$31.5 million; continuing ed, \$15.3 million; school secretaries, \$17 million.

Minister, I ask you again. Either the Premier is right and your proposal is wrong, or it's the other way around. Do you agree with the Premier or do you agree with your proposal? If so, stand in your place and say that proposal is dead.

Hon Mr Eves: It's not our proposal and I agree with the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): These cuts, in my view, are not a trial balloon. I know you're squinting with doubt, as if somehow this document came out of thin air. This is a real document that you people are going to consider. It's not a trial balloon.

What's revealing is not the cuts, because I know the cuts were coming to elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. What is particularly perverse, Deputy and Minister of Education and Premier, is the fact that you folks, you people were going to do this surreptitiously. That's the modus operandi of this government.

To avoid political flak, the document recommends that the government simply make some cuts without announcing them publicly. That is what is contemptible about this government, odious and perverse. You are about to renege on a promise you made. You are about to unleash yet another crisis.

The question to you, Deputy, is this: Are you going to have the fortitude and the courage to be able to detail these cuts when they will be announced, or are you going to do them surreptitiously, as the document suggests you were going to do?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, it is not a government document. Second of all, we will live up to the commitment that the Premier made during the course of the election campaign, in the Blueprint document, and reiterated on CFRB on Monday.

The Speaker: New question; the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: My second question is to the Deputy Premier as well. We have seen your track record over the last four years. Money was taken from education. Money was taken from elementary schools, secondary schools, colleges and universities in order to finance a tax cut that benefits the most well-off in the province, and you promised more tax cuts to the well-off again.

I want you to stand here and categorically say that not under this proposal, not under any proposal, will more money be taken from our boards of education, from our

schools, not in Toronto, not in Ottawa, not in Thunder Bay, not in Algoma, nowhere in the province. Will you stand here and make that categorical commitment now?

Hon Mr Eves: There may have been money that was taken out of the administration part of education and put in the classroom, where it belongs, during the last four and a half years.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Let me tell you what's going on out there, ever before these cuts even take place. In the Algoma District School Board, for example, community leaders are up in arms, the school board is up in arms, parents are beside themselves. The ministry has forced Algoma into a category that doesn't fit and it's thereby starved of the necessary funds. This will force school closures in remote communities, will force students to travel long distances in the winter on roads that close with every snowstorm. This is dangerous and unfair. It will rip the heart out of small communities where schools are also the community centres.

Will you ask your Minister of Education to come to Algoma to see for herself the urgent need to revise the school board designations and to provide interim funding?

The Sault Star last week said:

"A meeting with Ecker could bring a more rapid solution, particularly if it were to be held aboard a school bus on the road between the Soo and Wawa or Hearst or Blind River. That would vividly illustrate the challenging distances faced by this board."

Will you ask the minister to go north and meet with the board—

The Speaker: The member's time.

Hon Mr Eves: I'll let the Minister of Education answer for herself.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I quite understand that boards in the north, boards in rural areas, francophone boards, for example, have very significant challenges in terms of just the simple geography that they have to cover, and many have them have been doing an extremely good job of providing good quality education and directing as much money as they can into the classroom.

We recognize that uniqueness, the fact that they do need additional supports, by the way we fund them. There are additional monies for transportation, for example. That is one of the areas we are looking at as we look at how we can improve the funding arrangements, what we can do for rural boards and northern boards in terms of transportation or other ways to help them meet the challenge of giving the best education that they can for their children, because those children certainly deserve it.

1440

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): My question is to the Minister of Education. Over the last few weeks, you've been asked to come to account for your ministry and your government's harmful effects on school kids all across the province. Every time you've

been shrugging, and now we know why. It's worse than shrugging, Minister. You have a secret proposal you put forward to cut education further.

You were in no position to respond to the parents of special education kids you were keeping out of school in Hamilton. You could not respond to the students of the W.D. Lowe school in Windsor that you want to close, because you had already offered to cut even more money out of your own budget. Half of the money, half of the \$500 million, is supposed to come from your budget, and you offered it and you authorized it.

On behalf of those students I want to ask you: Now that you've been exposed, now that it's clear that this is your agenda, will you today cancel these cuts that are treacherous to the future of public education?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I will repeat it again for the honourable member, because he clearly was not listening when I said it the first time. A Toronto Star article is not the government's plan. We have been very clear on what our commitment is, to have more money in the classroom. We have indeed done that. We are prepared to do it even again.

I have clearly said to the honourable member across the way that special education funding needs to be changed in this province. Despite the fact that there is more money in special ed than there has ever been before, despite the fact that the policy that is being implemented is the policy that the boards and the experts in this area and the parents say is the right policy, we know that changes need to be made to do an even better job for special-ed students. That hasn't changed.

There is no secret proposal that will undermine that. There is no proposal. There is nothing that is undermining the commitment of the Premier that he stated in 1995, in 1999, last week on the radio, this morning in the scrum. I stand by the Premier's word.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, what you've said in this House before is that you would work with boards to improve funding, and yet, at the same time you did that, you had already agreed to make cuts, in a cabinet document.

Your government has already cut \$1 billion to education. These cuts speak of another \$550 million. This is not a new direction in education that you as the minister are bringing; it's just a new deception. Why should anyone connected with education believe anything you have to say?

The parents forced your Premier to put in mitigation funds, and now apparently those extra two years are going to be cancelled. You said there would be extra money for things, special education and so on. How can you do that if you're cutting \$550 million? On page 25 of the 1998 budget, your colleague the Minister of Finance promised \$130 million for computers that you apparently are willing to give up and sacrifice to the tax cut. Minister, will you get up today and will you apologize to the school kids of this province that you are letting down and will—

The Speaker: The member's time.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The Toronto Star article is not our government's plan. I have authorized no such plan. I have authorized no such cuts.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In rural Ontario, and I'm sure the same applies to my colleagues from northern Ontario, we continue to experience the lack of medical practitioners.

Interjection.

Mr Beaubien: If you'll listen for a minute, let me ask my question, please. OK? Thank you.

In rural Ontario, constituents are asking for accessible quality primary health care, and at times it is very, very difficult to provide. I am sure that if we used the expanded role of the nurse practitioner it could help us to resolve some of the problems.

We keep hearing about the role of the nurse practitioner in the province of Ontario, but my constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex still have difficulties with regard to accessing quality primary health care. Minister, can you give us an update as to how your ministry is progressing with this particular problem?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would indicate that since we passed the legislation that enabled nurse practitioners to practise in Ontario last year, we have been able to ensure that \$5 million has been made available. We have 120 nurse practitioners who are providing expanded health services in about 80 agencies.

We have also recently issued a request for proposal in order to hire 80 additional nurse practitioners who can serve in the underserved areas, the areas that you are concerned about. Those proposals are now being evaluated, and we expect to announce the awards very soon for those underserved areas.

We're also going to be making an additional 20 nurse practitioners available for long-term-care facilities and we will be announcing that pilot project very soon.

Mr Beaubien: Thank you, Minister, for the answer; however, what is your ministry doing in order to try to alleviate or prevent the problem on a long-term basis?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the member is well aware, the issue of accessibility to primary health services is not unique to this province; it's one shared by our colleagues' provinces and territories. We, however, are working with the medical community. Certainly we have plans. We're working with Dr McKendry. We'll have an expert panel.

In the very near future—as I say, we do have this RFP—we will be announcing and providing funding for an additional 106 nurse practitioners very soon. We hope to be able to announce that then.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities regarding the recommended cuts of close to \$300 million from colleges and universities. At last I hope the people of this province can see the hypocrisy of this government.

This government promised—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would ask the member to withdraw the word "hypocrisy" please.

Mrs Bountrogianni: I withdraw the comment.

This government promised a quality post-secondary education experience for every qualified and motivated student. What a hollow piece of rhetoric. With 30,000 more college students and 80,000 more university students coming to our institutions, with students already mortgaging their futures with soaring debt, with tuition the second highest in the country and with a need to replace thousands of retiring faculty, with the recommendation to establish private universities, to cut grants and to trim scholarships, it is obvious that only independently wealthy students would have a positive experience.

Minister, you said you were considering all the options. Will you today publicly deny that private American—

The Speaker: Order. The member's time has expired.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): We're always looking for better ways to improve our college and university system. We're looking at a number of options. I would like to read to the member that the Smith Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education recommended that the government should permit privately financed not-for-profit universities, subject to strict conditions on quality, financial responsibility and protection for students in the event of financial failure.

The opposition have asked us over the years whether we are taking the advice of the Smith Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education. We're looking at all options. We're looking for your best advice. We are talking and asking for input from our stakeholders and the public. It is under consideration.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Our best advice is, no, don't do it; we don't want American-style universities. Let's look at this announcement of proposed cuts from the perspective of trust. How can anyone trust a government which is now ready to break its promises to the youth of this province? It promised to reinvest the savings from the Millennium Scholarship, over \$100 million. It's breaking that promise. It promised to support our bright but needy high school students with Aiming for the Top scholarships. It hasn't even begun yet and they've already proposed to trim and therefore break that promise. It promised to begin implementation of the transition to a baccalaureate requirement for new registered nurses in 2001. It's breaking that promise. How can

the nurses in Hamilton trust this government? How can the students at Mohawk College and McMaster University in my region trust this government?

Again, Minister, I ask you, will you consider reneging on the article in the paper today?

1450

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Just to put the member at ease with regard to her question, the article in the paper today was a leaked document. It is not the policy of the government.

Two issues that the member spoke about: On the Aiming for the Top scholarship, we in fact are—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, member for Sudbury.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: To the member with regard to her question, we have committed \$35 million to the Aiming for the Top tuition scholarship for the top 10,000 students, to be implemented by September 2000, and these are students in financial need. We intend to keep that promise.

With regard to the nursing question that the member asked, where the nurses in Hamilton are concerned, I can only advise the member today that we are moving forward as quickly as possible and we intend to keep that promise.

With regard to reports and options that are brought forward to ministries over periods of time when they're in government, as they did the Liberals and the NDP, we do take a look at options that are available to us. Sometimes we take their advice, sometimes we do not. I am not speaking to specifics of any of these issues. We're intending to provide the best quality of education for all of those students who intend to apply to our universities, are qualified and motivated to do so.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Minister of Colleges and Universities just made reference to a leaked document and I believe it is in the rules of the House that if you're going to quote from a document you must table it. I'm asking that the document that the minister has referred to be tabled.

The Speaker: The member will know that the standing orders are for if the minister quotes at length. I believe she did not.

UNIFIED FAMILY COURT

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is addressed to the Attorney General. I'm sure the House is very aware of the difficulties that go with family law matters, the emotion that happens with separation on the part of all parties, but in particular that of the children. This issue is frequently raised in my riding and there is a lot of concern about it. Fortunately, yesterday a Unified Family Court was opened in my riding of Northumberland, in the town of Cobourg.

Could you tell us what the change is, how this change will help families using the court system and how they will receive better services?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Northumberland for the question. On November 15, 1999, I announced the opening of 12 new Unified Family Court locations in Ontario. This expansion further strengthens the Ontario government's commitment to families.

The family court is really important for three reasons, at least. First is the single-window approach that it provides for persons who are in need of family court services, second are the family mediation services that are available in family court, and third are the family law information centres, which are available to people who need the services so that they can better understand the system.

The new family law rules that are also introduced help family members understand the way the system works and help them make the important decisions they need to make during the process, particularly with respect to children.

Mr Galt: Certainly that is very encouraging and very good news for the people in my riding and for several other ridings here in the province of Ontario.

The Attorney General referred in his remarks to the single-window service and also the mediation services that are now going to be available with the Unified Family Court. He also made reference to the new family law rules. I would ask the Attorney General to explain to this House just how these changes, along with the Unified Family Courts, will benefit the people in my riding.

Hon Mr Flaherty: As you know, we hear often about our court system being too costly and too slow. The expansion of the family court means that more people in Ontario, approximately 40% of our population, will be served by a less costly and a much faster system in the resolution of family law disputes.

The number of Unified Family Courts in Ontario has tripled since 1995, since our government was elected, which puts the interests of children first in resolving family disputes. The best interests of children are, of course, fundamental to the family law system. At the same time, we have expanded the supervised access centres to every location in Ontario that has a Unified Family Court. There are 17 new locations: in my colleague the member for Northumberland's riding, in Cobourg; in Durham region, serving of course Whitby and Ajax among the other parts of Durham region; St Catharines; Bracebridge; Newmarket; Peterborough; Lindsay; Ottawa; Perth; Brockville; and L'Orignal.

ROBERTA BONDAR BUILDING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Roberta Bondar is a true Canadian hero. All Ontarians, especially residents of Sault Ste Marie, are shocked to learn that the Roberta Bondar Building is on the list of properties sent to the Ontario Realty Corp to prepare for sale.

We are hurt and insulted that the building named for Canada's first woman astronaut and a great source of pride to the Sault is to be sold in your mad dash for cash to cover your tax cuts. Minister, the Bondar building is named in an order in council identifying properties that you "propose to sell, lease or otherwise dispose of." Will you table in this House today the impact study you relied upon when you chose to insult Ontarians and a true Canadian hero by putting the Bondar building on this list?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): To those who aren't aware, what the member across the aisle refers to is a list of properties the ORC is looking at to determine whether the government needs those assets to deliver programs. I will pass on the concern. I think it's a good suggestion that whatever happens to the building, we keep the name on the building.

Mr Martin: That's just not good enough. I have it on good authority that Roberta Bondar herself is concerned about this move. It's in the order in council, so it's not just some airy-fairy sort of mention out there; it's real. Minister, will you do the right thing and tell Roberta Bondar, the people of Sault Ste Marie and all Ontarians that you were wrong? Will you today instruct the Ontario Realty Corp to remove the Bondar building from your sell-off list?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I've already told the member, I agree that the Roberta Bondar name has special significance to the people of Sault Ste Marie and indeed all Canadians. I will pass on to the Ontario Realty Corp board of directors that they keep the name on the building.

1500

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the acting Premier. Several weeks ago, we became aware of an OPP investigation of your then Minister of Municipal Affairs. The Premier, at the time that it became public, didn't think that the minister should step aside because of the OPP investigation, even when we learned that the allegation was concerning ransacking the pockets of developers to the tune of \$25,000 each in order to bend the ear of the minister through his personal lawyer, friend and Tory fundraiser.

My question for the acting Premier is this: Is it just a coincidence that the mayor of the city of Windsor was also told by this same minister to use this same personal friend, lawyer and Tory fundraiser, to appoint the same fellow as mediator in amalgamation with Essex county? Is it just a coincidence or is this, in fact, how your government does business? Is it policy for sale in the government of Ontario? Is this just a coincidence or is this how you do business now?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I would caution all members of the House against making unsubstantiated statements. She's well aware of the fact that the very matter and the minister to

whom she refers are currently under investigation by the OPP, and I would suggest to her that we await the results of that investigation.

Mrs Pupatello: We would like to know who is defending the public interest in all this. What we realize is that there's a pattern here. There is a connection between money that goes into the Tory Party and policy that comes out. That is the pattern that we are now finding with your government. What we want to know is—

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): On a point of order, Speaker: This is continuing. These imputations of malice are against the entire government when they state that there's policy for sale in the province of Ontario. I ask the member to withdraw—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will the member take his seat. It is not a point of order. Today has been a rather heated day, but I would caution all members to try and maintain so that we can answer some questions without disruption. I know all members want to continue with the tradition we have in this House of being able to co-operate and get questions on.

Final supplementary.

Mrs Pupatello: Acting Premier, our mayor said no. Our mayor said it was inappropriate that this minister would recommend that same personal lawyer to act as mediator in amalgamation talks. My question to you is this: Is it a coincidence that the same minister under the first allegation regarding developers is now using the same lawyer in a different set of policy discussions regarding amalgamation with the city of Windsor and Essex county? Is it a coincidence that this is now part of the OPP investigation or is this how you do business? Do cabinet ministers go through their personal friends for money? Is that how Ontario government sets policy today? That is—

The Speaker: Member's time. Deputy Premier.

Hon Mr Eves: I have no personal knowledge of the statements to which the honourable member refers. I can tell her that when this new information came to the attention of the Premier's staff late yesterday, the matter was referred to the Deputy Attorney General and the information has been referred to the OPP and is now part of the OPP's investigation.

SALE OF GOLD RESERVES

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. A few weeks ago, the European Central Bank and national central banks in Europe agreed to limit their sales of gold reserves over the next five years. As a result, the price of gold climbed by more than 10%. The United States, which holds the largest gold reserves, also is not selling gold bullion from its central bank. In contrast, however, the federal government in Canada seems to support the sale of gold reserves.

My concern, of course, is that Ottawa is sending the wrong message to the international market and in so doing is hurting an important industry in our province.

Minister, are you aware of this problem, and if so, what is your position on the sale of gold bullion?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member from Niagara Falls for the question. I'm very well aware of this problem because it is a very serious issue for communities in northern Ontario.

In fact, Canada is the fourth-largest gold producer internationally, and Ontario produces approximately half of Canada's gold. Many communities have been built and continue to thrive on mining and gold mining across northern Ontario: Red Lake, Timmins, Hemlo, to name a few. But the federal government persists in a policy of allowing the Bank of Canada to sell off gold reserves. This has put downward pressure on the price of gold, which has a direct economic impact on communities in northern Ontario.

When I had the pleasure of representing the province of Ontario at the Charlottetown mines ministers' conference in the fall, I called upon the federal government to re-examine their policy on gold sales, and I was pleased to be supported by the provinces of Quebec and British Columbia. I will continue to press and have written to Minister Goodale to reconsider this policy that's damaging to northern communities.

Mr Maves: As you alluded to, mining, especially gold and nickel, are vital industries in Ontario; in fact, Ontario's mineral production is about \$5.5 billion a year. However, Ottawa seems to be doing little to support our mining industry and the continuation by the Liberals of their policy of selling gold reserves is damaging the northern Ontario economy. What commitment has Ottawa made in response to the letter you've written them about the sale of gold reserves?

Hon Mr Hudak: As I mentioned, I had written Minister Goodale asking the federal government to reconsider the policy of allowing the Bank of Canada to sell off gold reserves. It puts downward pressure on the price of gold. Although we've seen leadership from Europe and the United States on this matter, I think it's only fair that Canada, as a leading producer of gold internationally, should take action and examine this issue.

I'm disappointed that in the past six weeks I have not had a response from the federal government. I know that the Mining Association of Canada and the Ontario Mining Association as well are calling for changes in this policy. I will continue to fight on behalf of Ontario's gold mine communities. I urge Ottawa to send an important message not only to the communities in northern Ontario and across Canada but, importantly, internationally that Canada is on the side of gold mining communities and will take up policies that support gold mining in the province of Ontario and not go against them.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question; the member for Middlesex-London.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): And Elgin, Mr Speaker; we've got to remember the Elgin.

My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Two weeks ago, the government of Canada committed to covering farmers' eligible negative margins for both 1998 and 1999 under the income disaster program. This means an additional \$20 million to \$30 million in federal funds in the hands of Ontario families whose farms are in jeopardy. Unfortunately, Mr Minister, you appear to be talking out of both sides of your mouth. I've been talking to representatives of the OFA, the CFA and the Ontario pork producers, even your neighbour the president of the Oxford county pork producers. These good farmers want and deserve an answer.

The federal government is committed to helping Ontario farmers through bad times. They're putting up to 60% of the money required. Will commit today to join the cost-sharing arrangement with the federal government?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I can assure you that the federal government did make a commitment, and made an announcement in fact, that they were going to put \$170 million more into the farm safety net program for the farmers who are suffering through some very low commodity prices and some downturn in farm commodity prices.

Included in that, they suggested that the programs will and must be funded 60-40 by the provinces, and the Ontario government is committed to doing that. One of the other issues they have included is that we must look at the program as it exists, including negative margins and a number of other issues. We very much want to do that, save and except that the negative margins are not supported, as the member would suggest, by our stakeholders. In fact, all but one or two are opposed to funding negative margins. They feel that there are many other opportunities to which we could apply to this program—

The Speaker: Will the minister take his seat. I'm sorry, it's time.

1510

Mr Peters: Minister, my office has spoken to Ed Segsworth, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and they are more than willing to sit down with you and work out how to cover negative margins without compromising market revenue and crop insurance.

You still haven't answered the question. Millions of dollars are waiting in Ottawa to be distributed to Ontario farmers. This money will keep family farms in the black. You have a contract to administer these funds. They're there for you to deliver, whether Ontario is in the program or not. Peter Dekraker, a constituent of mine, called your assistant deputy minister yesterday and he was told that they're still waiting for details from Ottawa. Well, our office called Ottawa yesterday and the money is ready to go. You've had two weeks to pick up the phone and get it to the farmers. It is outrageous that you haven't. Why have you been so heartless and waited to provide the funds that are desperately needed by so many farmers in my constituency and this province? Why have

you sat on your duff while debt piles up on Ontario farmers? Why have you not delivered the cheques that Ottawa has committed to them?

Hon Mr Hardeman: I want to commend the member opposite that he got the federal government to suggest that they are committed to sending the money. I would like to ask him if maybe he would consider also asking them to send the money for the program that was approved previously, which the province is presently funding for our farmers, the 1999 whole farm relief program, for which the federal government has not yet sent any money to the province of Ontario. I would ask if maybe he could request that.

I would also suggest, on the issue of speaking to the federation of agriculture, that as I mentioned, the majority of our stakeholders are opposed to the funding of negative margins. The only organization that is not, that has come out publicly supporting that, is Ed Segsworth and the federation of agriculture, but not the commodity groups which he represents. In fact, I've had correspondence from almost all our commodity groups, who suggest that we should be looking at other ways of making sure that the farmers get their fair share of the money—

The Speaker: Will the member take his seat.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors' issues. Elder abuse has been recognized as a problem in Ontario and indeed it is climbing. The province has funded various projects that address elder abuse in several communities across the province. Local groups have undertaken many worthwhile initiatives to help seniors who are victimized, and I commend them for that.

The work of Dr Elizabeth Podnieks, chair of the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, and others has focused more attention on the issue. Despite the many worthwhile programs that have been developed in the province, there is currently no overall strategy to ensure that efforts are coordinated and complementary.

What types of strategies is this government proposing to develop, and what role will the elder abuse round table play in the development of these strategies?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for the question. I'd like to say that I was pleased yesterday to join with Dr Elizabeth Podnieks and announce the members of the round table, along with a couple of other initiatives we've entered into. The round table has been prepared to allow us to identify the needs we have of seniors, so we can map out our next steps, can move forward to ensure that seniors are safe in their communities and in their homes.

Yesterday, we also announced that we should work towards making sure that people who deal with seniors on a regular basis, the CCAC members, have the proper

training to identify elder abuse in our communities. So we're working with respect to that.

Another thing we're doing is moving into two pilot programs to ensure that we can find the best way to identify elder abuse and to make sure that we progress with it and make sure people are safe.

Mr Stewart: I understand that the round table will comprise influential, high-profile, very knowledgeable seniors and opinion leaders representing many sectors where elder abuse can occur. Minister, I also understand that you will be co-chairing the round table, along with Dr Podnieks. Can you enlighten us on who some of the individuals will be who will make up the elder abuse round table, and some of the organizations that will be influential in the development of this comprehensive provincial strategy to prevent elder abuse?

Hon Mrs Johns: First of all I'd like to say that I was pleased, thrilled that Dr Elizabeth Podnieks agreed to co-chair this committee with me. She has received an Order of Canada for her work in elder abuse. She's a leading researcher in this problem and I think that we have someone who can help all the senior citizens of Ontario.

We also took 20 influential seniors and opinion leaders to help us with this year of work that we intend to enter into. We wanted to raise awareness within the community and we wanted to make sure there were a number of sectors that were represented at the table.

We went so far as to look at people who would be involved with seniors on a day-to-day basis. We have people from the Ontario police association; we have people from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the Law Society of Upper Canada, the Ontario Residential Care Association. We have seniors and registered nurses, along with the CEO from one of the hospitals. We've worked hard to make sure we have—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister's time. New question.

DRUG AWARENESS WEEK

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Health. As you know, this is Drug Awareness Week and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has released a study showing that drug use among teens is rising at a very alarming rate—binge drinking, cocaine, Ecstasy. It has risen by almost one third in the last six years. Those are both sad and shocking statistics.

Your government is fond of using language about cracking down on things, whether it's squeeze kids or police chases that drivers invoke. I wish I could see some evidence that you're willing to crack down on addictions, that you're willing to take the steps to bring back to this province a substance abuse strategy.

Yesterday in the Provincial Auditor's report, his comments were a damning indictment. He said that you have no system in place to monitor waiting lists. Some patients are waiting up to 76 days to get into recovery homes. He said you're not addressing the special needs

of youth, people who desperately need addiction treatment to get their lives back on track. He says you don't even have any more an overall strategy for addiction prevention.

Will you stand up against your government's obsession with squeegee kids and do something to really help kids: Bring in a substance abuse strategy for children and youth in this province.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member obviously hasn't been listening to some of the speeches I have been making. I have repeatedly been expressing the concern of our government when we have seen the increased use of tobacco and drugs in Ontario. As we have said on many occasions, we are shifting the focus from illness to wellness to prevention programs. We are continuing to introduce initiatives such as our tobacco strategy, where we have actually doubled the amount of money that is available to deal with the whole issue of ensuring that young people don't start to smoke and that those who are smoking quit. In fact, we've increased it from \$9 million to \$19 million. We are moving forward with our drug prevention programs as well.

Ms Lankin: Your speeches are one thing, but let's look at the reality of what has happened. In the period of 1990-95, let me just highlight some of the things that happened during that government. An interministerial committee on substance abuse was formed in 1992. Your government trashed that, Minister. In 1993 the Ontario substance abuse strategy was launched. The auditor says you no longer have a provincial strategy. In 1994 we appointed the provincial advisory committee on substance abuse. In 1995 we put drug prevention education into the Common Curriculum. What have you done? You cut \$5 million from the Addiction Research Foundation over the period of time from 1995, when you were elected, to now.

Minister, we're talking about kids whom, if they become addicted, it affects the rest of their lives. What I'm asking you to do is not give speeches but to put in place a real strategy to prevent addictions, and support the important work of the Addiction Research Foundation by restoring the funding to them. Will you take a look at the auditor's criticism and—

The Speaker: Member's time.

1520

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again I would indicate what I indicated yesterday, that the auditor's report was based on information that certainly was prior to the time that is today. Much of the information was gathered in 1998 and early 1999.

The member knows that at the present time we are taking steps to ensure that the children who need addiction treatment services have access to them. As the member knows, we are undertaking a rationalization of addiction services and we are creating a far more responsive and integrated system than we have ever had before.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep receiving petitions from residents of the west end of Toronto about the closure of public schools. This petition is addressed to the Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government's decision to slash education funding could lead to the closure of many neighbourhood schools, including one of the most community-oriented schools like F.H. Miller Junior School; and

"Whereas the present funding formula does not take into account the historic and cultural links schools have with their communities nor the special education programs that have developed as a direct need of our communities; and

"Whereas the prospect of closing neighbourhood community schools will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion dollars from our schools; and

"Whereas F.H. Miller Junior School is a community school with many links to the immediate neighbourhood, such as the family centre, after-school programs, special programs from Parks and Recreation, and a heritage language program;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens, demand that the Harris government changes the funding formula to take into account the historic, cultural and community links that F.H. Miller Junior School has established."

Since I agree with this petition I'm signing it now.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permits and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-

lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

DUMP EXPANSION

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I have a petition from the Mohawk people of Tyendinaga and I will read it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mohawk people of Tyendinaga are opposed to the Canadian Waste Services Inc's expansion of Richmond township; and

"Whereas the Mohawk people of Tyendinaga are very concerned over US waste coming to our area for disposal;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Mohawk people of Tyendinaga do not support any expansion plans presented by Canadian Waste Services Inc. We do not want a legacy of pollution to flow through our rivers and creeks for many decades to come as a result of the Canadian Waste Services Inc landfill disposal operations in Richmond township. Please stop the dump expansion in Richmond township."

Being in total support, I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

MARRIAGE

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the majority of Canadians believe that fundamental matters of social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament and the legislatures, and not the unelected judiciary;

"Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada in the M. and H. case has rejected biology, tradition and societal norms to redefine the term 'spouse' to include the non-procreative partnerships of homosexual couples, and has effectively granted these relationships 'equivalent-to-married' status;

"Whereas the court's decision will devalue the institution of marriage, and it is the duty of the Legislature to ensure that marriage, as it has always been known and understood, be preserved and protected;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including invoking section 33 of the charter (the 'notwithstanding clause'), to preserve and protect the commonly understood, exclusive definitions of 'spouse,' 'marriage' and 'family' in all areas of provincial law."

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition here which is directed to the Health Services Restructuring Commission, the Ontario Ministry of Health and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's called "Save the Dieu!"

"The Health Services Restructuring Commission (HSRC) has given notice that it intends to direct the Hotel Dieu Hospital to close and to require that the sisters (Religious Hospitalers of St Joseph's) cease to govern. If the proposed direction is made and implemented, then the access to high quality health care will be seriously undermined in Kingston and region;

"The sisters are recognized for their leadership in the health care community. They have developed the plan for, and operated, an efficient outpatient teaching hospital and have provided a high quality of patient care for 153 years from the same location. Their distinct values and philosophy, coupled with the sisters' tradition of compassionate care, must not disappear;

"The HSRC proposed directions call for the dismissal of the sisters from their role in the governance of the outpatient health care at Hotel Dieu Hospital. This is not in the best interests of the patients and families in this city and region;

"The people of Kingston deserve to have access to the kind of quality health care for which the sisters are well recognized;

"Those who must use public transportation to get to outpatient clinics will be seriously affected. The taxpayers should not have to shoulder any extra burden in paying for a new outpatient facility when the Hotel Dieu site can accommodate the needs of the people of Kingston. Many downtown businesses will suffer greatly should the site be closed.

"The sisters of the Hotel Dieu Hospital are therefore asking you to help them in their response to the commission by signing this petition."

Therefore, they have signed this petition which is to help save the Hotel Dieu Hospital. I've attached my signature to it as well.

IPPERWASH

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas early in September of 1995 there occurred a series of events involving the Premier of Ontario and members of his government, the Ontario Provincial Police and demonstrators representing members of the First Nations at Ipperwash Provincial Park;

"Whereas the events led to the death of Dudley George, one of the First Nations demonstrators;

"Whereas these events have raised concern among all parties in the Legislature and many Ontarians; and

"Whereas there has been introduced in the House a piece of legislation known as 'The Truth About Ipperwash Act';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"In order that there is an answer to concerns of the Legislature and Ontarians regarding the events at Ipperwash, the members of the Legislative Assembly vote in favour of 'The Truth About Ipperwash Act.'"

I sign my name to that petition.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly which reads as follows:

"Say no to the privatization of health care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are concerned about the quality of health care in Ontario;

"Whereas we do not believe health care should be for sale;

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is taking steps to allow profit-driven companies to provide health care services in Ontario;

"Whereas we won't stand for profits over people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not privatize our health care services."

I do concur with the petitioners and I will affix my signature to it.

1530

CHILD POVERTY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have here a petition signed by St Margaret's United Church. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly and to the Minister of Community and Social Services, the Minister of Health and the Acting Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the God recorded in the Scriptures is concerned with the well-being of children; and

"Whereas the Scriptures consider it is the responsibility of government and society to protect the well-being of children; and

"Whereas the children of Canada, including Ontario, although voiceless and voteless, are entitled to the same consideration as any other citizens or landed immigrants; and

"Whereas the Canadian Parliament in 1989 committed itself unanimously to eliminate child poverty by the year 2008 but in fact child poverty has increased in the province of Ontario since 1989 by 116%; and

"Whereas of the number of persons in receipt of Ontario Works financial assistance, or family benefits, over 50% are children; and

"Whereas food banks indicate that 50% of persons assisted each month are under 18 years of age; and

"Whereas children in poverty are twice as likely to have physical and mental health problems, twice as likely to have social integration problems, twice as likely not to

finish high school, three times more likely to become involved in crime; and

"Whereas by ignoring the problem of child poverty the long-term cost to our society will be extreme;

"Therefore, St Margaret's United Church, Kingston, calls upon the government of the province of Ontario and the federal government to acknowledge and address the problems of child poverty more vigorously and comprehensively than heretofore, and by working in partnership with the municipalities and other agencies, to identify the causes of child poverty, develop solutions to address these causes and to implement those solutions quickly."

It's signed by Marilyn Norman, the chair of the official board and Jack Linscott, the chair of the outreach committee. I affix my signature to it as well, as I'm in total agreement with it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have the pleasure of reading another petition I have received addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Mike Harris is cutting the heart out of many communities by closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario; and

"Whereas this massive number of school closings will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools and is now closing many classrooms completely; and

"Whereas Mike Harris is pitting parent against parent and community against community in the fight to save local schools; and

"Whereas parents and students in the city of Toronto and many other communities across Ontario are calling on the government to stop closing so many of their schools;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Mike Harris stop closing local schools."

I do concur with the petitioners and again I will affix my signature to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 7, An Act to protect taxpayers against tax increases, to establish a process requiring voter approval for proposed tax increases and to ensure that the Provincial Budget is a balanced budget, when

Bill 7 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That the order for third reading of the bill shall then immediately be called and the remainder of the sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill;

At 5:55 pm or 9:25 pm, as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the divisional bell shall be limited to five minutes.

I would just like to indicate that I will be turning over the floor to the member from Scarborough Southwest when the government's time on this resumes.

The bill before us is a very important piece of legislation to the people of Ontario. It's been very clear over the last number of years that the policy of this government to continue to reduce the tax burden to the taxpayers of Ontario has benefited people throughout this province in all walks of life and in all income brackets.

It has been suggested by the opposition that tax cuts benefit only the rich. The truth of the matter is that it is all of our experience that because of the nature of the policies of this government that provide for tax cuts for all income earners in the province, everyone benefits. In fact, the poor benefit more than anyone else because it's only as a result of this fiscal policy of our government that we can boast of some 610,000 net new jobs having been created in this province over the last four years. Jobs are what people in this province who are today dependent on social services need. There is nothing that Ontarians want and deserve more than the right to earn an income, than the right to self-sufficiency, and that is what this policy that is represented in this piece of legislation before the House today underpins and underscores.

We look forward as a government to continuing to debate this piece of legislation which will entrench tax reduction and will ensure that this government and future governments will do the right thing, will be fiscally responsible, will no longer run deficits and will no longer spend more than is in fact available.

I believe that we owe this not only to people present, but for generations to come. We look forward to this piece of legislation being enacted to provide for the future prosperity and security of the people in our province.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I am pleased to join the debate. Just for clarification, Mr Speaker, I understand that we're rotating and using our time and I guess each party has roughly 45 minutes.

I want to begin the debate on closure on this important bill. The debate effectively is ending today on the bill and the bill will be passed Monday at the latest, perhaps as early as tomorrow.

This is an important piece of legislation. I want to raise several concerns about the implementation of the bill, to get these on the record. The first is that yesterday the government introduced a new piece of legislation that changes the way we record the sale of assets in the province of Ontario. The public may recall that at one time the Harris government said, on the sale of assets, that when something like the 407 was sold, or any one of the province's assets: "The money we make from such asset sales will not go into the government accounts. Every penny will go directly to pay down the ... provincial debt." Yesterday, we had a piece of legislation introduced that will wipe that out, that will allow the government to use the sale of assets for essentially anything they deem appropriate.

So we find now that rather than selling off assets—perhaps many unnecessary assets—and using that to reduce the debt, we're essentially going to use it, in household terms, to pay for the groceries and not to pay down our mortgage. The problem with that is that most of our day-to-day expenses here in government occur by definition each and every year, but the government now has decided, I think mistakenly, to allow itself to use the sale of assets to pay for ongoing operations. This is spreading, I might add. The city of Toronto, I see today, is looking at selling off its hydroelectric system and using the proceeds from that to pay for its ongoing operations.

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That is the first issue I wanted to raise about the implications of this bill and what I think are some of the growing problems with the books of the province of Ontario—the giving itself the right, instead of using the sale of assets to pay down debt, to pay for the day-to-day operations.

The second concern I've got is somewhat related, and that is, the province has told us that they plan to have capital expenditures of roughly \$20 billion over the next five years, roughly \$4 billion per year. That, I might add, is probably a minimum necessary to maintain the infrastructure of Ontario. Historically, if you look back over the last decade, it's been averaging probably around \$4 billion a year. That's for our roads and our hospitals and our schools and our colleges and universities—the infrastructure.

The province has said they are planning to expend roughly \$4 billion each year for the next five years. The challenge comes, though: They say that half of that will be funded by the taxpayer, the other half by the private sector. So we're relying on the private sector to fund half of our capital infrastructure over the next five years. I say if that were possible, great, but we all understand the business world.

The business world is in the business of making profit, and so they should be, and so they have to be. They're out of business if they don't. The private sector cannot,

would not and will not build infrastructure for the province of Ontario without a significant return on that investment, so I can guarantee us that what will happen is that we can get the private sector to build the infrastructure but only by guaranteeing that they will make a profit on it. We're not going to find an extra \$10 billion of infrastructure spending from the private sector; we're simply going to have the private sector perhaps expend \$10 billion but expect payment and profit on that \$10-billion expenditure.

The classic case, to me, is Highway 407. The government holds that up as a terrific example of private sector involvement in infrastructure. I say, and I think time will prove us right on this, that the users of the 407 have been terribly shafted.

What the government did there was they had the road built for a roughly \$1.6-billion cost and then they put it out to tender to sell it. And they were able to sell it for \$3.2 billion. They made a \$1.6-billion profit. But how did they do that? They did it by selling it for 99 years, guaranteeing the purchaser that they can take the tolls up each and every year for the next 15 years at inflation plus 2%. And they did it by saying, "We will guarantee that you can collect the tolls" because your driver's licence can't be renewed if you haven't paid the tolls.

The private sector loved the 407 deal. This is a money-maker of the first order, probably one of the biggest money-makers in the province, clearly in the next couple of decades. That road is going to be jammed. I have mentioned this before: I periodically use it if I'm in a hurry and I'm prepared to lay out \$6 or \$7 to save myself a few minutes. I'll do that. But the day-to-day users of that are paying at least \$120 million a year in extra tolls to cover the difference between what it cost to build that and what the government sold it at.

So I say the purchasers love it. For 99 years they're going to own that. For all of us who know that 407, it runs across the north of the GTA. It's already crowded. It's guaranteed to get more crowded. It will be a huge money-maker.

The government, in its pre-election run-up, was able to put \$1.6 billion more into its revenue but the users of the 407, for ever and a day, are going to be paying for that.

The reason I continually raise that is because the government has told us that over the next five years they are going to do similar projects, and half of our infrastructure is going to be built with those sorts of projects. Believe me, I have no difficulty with the private sector doing these things, but to expect that somehow or other this is found money is naive. What will happen is the government will sell off to the private sector—in the financial community the jargon is, "We'll sell a stream of revenue." For the 407 the stream of revenue is the tolls. They will sell off schools and the stream of revenue will be the annual payment by the school board. But it is still debt under any definition. I raise that because as we look down the road at the books of the province, that is a growing concern.

The third concern I've got is that we still have, frankly, two sets of books in the province, and the auditor pointed that out. We still find with the public accounts that we have two sets of numbers. We have the number that is reported by the government in its estimates and the number that's reported by the government in its financial statements.

As a matter of fact, for those who are interested in it, the public accounts which came out a few weeks ago show that in terms of real cash expenditures, money laid out by the province, money actually expended, the expenditures were \$60.3 billion. The financial statements show a number of \$57.8 billion, roughly a \$2.3-billion difference between what was actually laid out in cash and what's reported in the books. The reason for that is that, among other things, the government actually spends about \$1.2 billion on pensions. That's how much money the province has to spend on pensions. That's how much money it actually lays out in cash. But if you can believe this, in the books, in the budget, the government shows not an expense on pensions, but essentially a profit of \$300 million. So the cash out is roughly \$1.2 billion, and if you take the time to look in the budget, they show a positive cash flow from the pensions of \$300 million.

How could that possibly be? The way the budgets report it is they take what actually was spent by the pension fund, compare it to what the pension fund's increase in assets was, and that's the number that goes in the budget. But the actual cash payment by the province, as I say, is \$1.2 billion.

I raise these issues because if we here in the Legislature don't have a clear view of the true state of the finances of the province as we head towards the year of the implementation of this plan and understand what our real finances are, we're not dealing with reality.

I wanted to talk a little bit about Hydro as well. The reason I raise Hydro is that certainly all the people in the Legislature know, but I think most of the public also knows, there's been a very substantial change in the way that Ontario Hydro is structured. It has now been divided into several different companies: essentially, a generating company that has all of the generating plants; a service company that has the lines; and many people in Ontario actually get their electricity directly from Ontario Hydro—that's the service company.

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By the way, the debt of Ontario Hydro has always been guaranteed by the province of Ontario. Ontario Hydro pays the provincial government a couple of hundred million dollars to guarantee the debt, but now the debt is right on the books of the province of Ontario for the first time, and that is why those who follow the finances of the province would see that the debt of the province went from \$109 billion in 1998-99, the fiscal year that ended a few months ago, to \$121 billion. That was heavily because of Ontario Hydro.

But the auditor points out that—and he pointed this out in last year's report—Ontario Hydro did not use generally accepted accounting procedures when they

reported their financial statements last year. In our Provincial Auditor's opinion, they substantially overstated future net income estimates by essentially taking many expenses that were due in 1999, 2000 and 2001, moving them forward and writing them off against an old financial statement. The auditor said that was incorrect.

Hydro used a unique authority they have, called the rate-setting authority, to essentially, in my opinion, cook the books. That's strong language, but in my opinion they cooked the books. What the auditor said was that they essentially, now that they are going to market, have either been—"caught" may be too strong a word, but they have been forced to restate the finances. This is the Provincial Auditor in his report from yesterday.

We understand that Ontario Hydro Services Co, one of the successor companies to Ontario Hydro, has determined with its external auditors that it would be appropriate to restate certain of its financial statements along the lines that we have suggested for Ontario Hydro, that is, expenses are included in the operating results in the year in which those expenses occurred.

"In our view"—this is the auditor's speaking—"the ability of Ontario Hydro's successor companies to raise funds through public issues is essential to containing the risk to the government of Ontario under guarantees provided on existing Ontario Hydro debt."

The reason this is extremely important is that the taxpayers are now on the hook. These successor companies, when they go to the market and are forced to report their true earnings, could have difficulty in raising the money, and it will come back on to the province.

I spend the time on it because now a substantial part of our debt is as a result of what's called the stranded debt of Ontario Hydro. Ontario Hydro, at the very least, did not use generally accepted accounting principles when they stated their financial health. Now, as they go to market, one of those companies has been forced to restate the numbers; others will be forced to restate the numbers. It proves that the auditor was right, Hydro was wrong, and we've been dealing with an inappropriate set of finances from Ontario Hydro.

I also want to talk a little bit about a couple of other aspects of the auditor's report, because it impacts on how the finances of the province are reported and how much confidence we can have in those statements. I don't think any objective look at the report would conclude anything other than this fact: This is the most damning report by a Provincial Auditor of the Harris government in four years.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): You say that every year.

Mr Phillips: I'm glad Mr Maves is now in. Now that you've got me going, Mr Maves, here's what the auditor said.

This is a government that said they were going to outsource—this is the big government that knows how to manage things. "We're going to contract out highway maintenance." What happened? The auditor looked at it. You don't save money; it's costing you money. The

bright lights in the highways operation have got it all wrong. They've contracted this thing out and it's costing the taxpayer money—it was dumb. But Mr Maves seems to like that. Not only is it costing more money; you know what they're going to do? They've already done it for a third of the highways; they are going to do it for all the highways. But Mr Maves thinks that is a good idea.

Then Mike Harris took over the Family Responsibility Office and he was going to fix the Family Responsibility Office. You know what the auditor said there. Maybe Mr Maves thinks this is a good idea, but I certainly don't think it's a good idea. The auditor went through the Family Responsibility Office, and he was shocked at what happened. Here's what happened: Since Mike Harris and the bright lights took over—Mr Maves thinks this is good—the arrears have gone from \$700 million to \$1.2 billion. The cases that the auditor says are in arrears have gone from 96,000 when Mike Harris and Bart Maves took over—it's now 128,000.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I wanted to just remind you that it's improper to make interjections and that we traditionally refer to other members as their riding.

Mr Maves: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Not only is it inappropriate to refer to a member by his name rather than his riding, I think it's also inappropriate for the member to be trying to interpret what I'm thinking and what my opinions on certain issues are. He's continually doing that and I would ask him to stop that.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Phillips: That was Mr Maves from Niagara Falls. I just point out—

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: I'll go through more if you want me to go through more.

The Attorney General is here now. This is good. This is the person responsible for this mess at the Family Responsibility Office: the Attorney General. I'm glad he's here.

This is a disgrace. The arrears have gone to \$1.2 billion from \$700 million. The number of cases in arrears have gone from 96,000 to 128,000. As my leader, Dalton McGuinty, said yesterday, the Attorney General is Mr Tough Guy on those 200 squeegee kids who are out there, but when it comes to 200,000 children who are being left because deadbeat dads aren't paying, he's spending all his time going after those squeegee kids. Surely the Family Responsibility Office has an equal if not a higher priority by far than the squeegee kids.

I might also add that the auditor went through the fact that in the health area—the member for Niagara Falls has got me going on this now; I hadn't planned to spend this amount of time on the auditor's report—in the cancer area, after four years of Mike Harris, only one third, in fact fewer than a third, of the people who need treatment for cancer are getting treatment in the appropriate time—fewer than a third.

Premier Harris has said that the hospital restructuring will cost a certain amount of money. The auditor is

saying it's going to cost twice that amount of money. The reason I raise this is because many of my friends think the Conservatives know how to manage things, and I send them this report and I say, "Take a look at the areas that the auditor looked at, whether it be the outsourcing, where it looks like it's going to cost us more money—we're not going to save money; the Family Responsibility Office, where the problems are growing, not shrinking; the cancer area, where fully over two thirds of the people aren't getting serviced in the time that the government set for itself." The reason I raise these things is because as we look ahead at the ability of the government to manage its finances, we have now the report card. This is the report card on the first four years of the Harris government, and I would encourage the public to get a copy of it and to read through it.

One area that the auditor was not particularly harsh on was the Liquor Control Board of Ontario stores. One reporter had an interesting observation. The reporter said, "Is it not ironic that the stores that sell the alcohol are running efficiently but the alcohol abuse programs seem to be running extremely badly?" Haven't you got your priorities a little wrong there? Shouldn't you have the alcohol abuse programs running as well as the stores are running? I would encourage the public to go through this, because it has an impact very much on the finances and the books of the province as we look ahead.

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I want to make one final point because my colleagues want to have an opportunity to speak as well. I think it's important to continue to remind ourselves of what is driving the Ontario economy. The government, any government of the day, would like to take credit. However, in the 1999 budget one of the most important pages for me was page 13. That points out that what clearly is driving the Ontario economy is exports. This is what it says here: In 1989, 27.5% of Ontario's gross domestic product was exports; in 1998 it was 49%. It's probably over 50% now. It is over 90% to the US and, as we all know, heavily auto.

I commend our business sector for being able to compete aggressively, particularly in the US. I'm very pleased that we've shown we can compete very successfully down there. It indicates a lot of things we've got to make sure we do well in the future to continue to compete down there. But I think we also need to remind ourselves of why we have been successful in doing that. I use the government's own—

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Do you have any ideas?

Mr Phillips: There's Mr Hastings barracking again. One idea I've got is, start to manage the finances again. There's an idea. I think people would feel a little more confident if you managed the province properly.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Order. The member for Etobicoke North will come to order.

Mr Phillips: I've finally woken the dog up there. My apologies.

Yes, I have lots of ideas. One idea I'll give you is, stop cutting colleges and universities. The single most important reason why people invest here and grow here is the quality of the workforce, and you're cutting that.

The second thing I'd say to you is, start investing in our roads. The 401 is a massive problem, particularly as we head down to Windsor, where the bulk of our auto parts are heading. It's an acknowledged huge problem. But no, you're cutting Hydro expenses.

The third suggestion I have for you is the quality of our health care system. Why do auto plants want to locate here heavily? Because of the quality of our health care system and the fact that it is about half as expensive per employee for health care. That's another suggestion for you.

I don't know whether you want to hear those suggestions, but those are all good suggestions that you may want to take back with you and think about and do something about.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Why didn't your government do anything?

Mr Phillips: The Attorney General, who screwed up the Family Responsibility Office, is now sitting in cabinet where they're considering more cuts to education. We heard today a proposal from the government for as much as \$800 million. The Attorney General, who sits at the cabinet table, wants to cut further. I say it's time to invest in Ontario, not to be cutting Ontario. I can understand the Attorney General's sensitivities when the Provincial Auditor gave him such a scathing report indicating that he's making the Family Responsibility Office worse.

I'm pleased to have a chance to give some advice to the government: Stop cutting education—that's the cornerstone of our workforce; fix our infrastructure; stop selling the 407 users down the road; say no at the cabinet table to these proposals coming in education; and continue to support our health care system.

Mr Hastings: Did you ever say no at the cabinet table? No.

Mr Phillips: Mr Hastings may not want to hear these things, but those are positive, important suggestions. Recognizing that the reason Ontario's economy has been working so well has nothing to do with Mike Harris. It has mostly to do with our fine business sector that is able to compete successfully in the US market.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Martin: It's interesting that the Attorney General and the member from Etobicoke North seem to have a lot to say here this afternoon when they're not on their feet. I hope they will take advantage of the opportunity later to

get up and say something concrete, put it on the table about this closure motion and the balanced budget legislation that they're trying to ram through here.

They're over there laughing and chuckling as if they've just bought the candy store and they're going to do with it what they will; distribute the goodies to all of their friends and benefactors and to hell with everybody else, to hell with the education system, to hell with the health care system and to heck with social services and poor people in this province. "As long as our friends and benefactors, as long as the people we go golfing with and have our big parties with are doing well, it doesn't matter about anybody else because, after all, we believe in trickle-down."

The people of Ontario are getting sick and tired of being trickled on and are going to rise at some point in the middle of all of this and give you guys the message you deserve, which is to get out of here. If you don't want to be the government—this is what you keep telling us: "You know, we're not the government. We're here to fix it; we don't want to be the government"—then give the government over to somebody who wants to be the government, who wants to do the work that's required, who wants to get into the trenches, roll up their sleeves and work hard on behalf of the people of this province and bring in an economic development plan that is a bit more sophisticated than simply handing out tax breaks. Then we might have something going here, something people could buy into, something people could be proud of, something people could see some future in.

But no, all you guys can do is show up here on the odd afternoon and chatter, chatter, chatter, talk away, say nothing—a lot of hot air. I've never seen so much hot air in my whole life before as I see when I come in here and I listen to the Attorney General and the member from Etobicoke North. They're nothing but big bags of wind that blow in here and have nothing to offer, nothing to say. Leave it to the whiz kids in Mike's office. They know what they're doing. They're taking us down a road that's going to be good for everybody and who cares what's going on right now? "That's the price you have to pay. There's a bit of sacrifice. Somebody has to hurt and it's great that it's somebody else and not us, and who cares?"

Here we are again today, after four years going on five years of government by these guys—I guess government by default because they don't want to be government—debating a closure motion, debating again a motion to stop debate on a really important issue before the people of this province, to be debated by all of us here who have been elected by people from our constituencies to carry their voice, to challenge, to ask questions, to raise issues, and we're being told that's going to be shut off, that we're going to be closed down. "We don't want to hear any more. We've heard enough. There was too much, to begin with, being put forward and we're going to put an end to it," just like they're putting an end to democracy in this province in so many significant and important ways.

Ever since they got to power, it's been nothing but one takeaway after another from democracy: reducing the number of MPPs, reducing the number of school boards, reducing the number of trustees, reducing the number of municipalities, reducing the number of councillors who serve in municipalities. Sooner or later we'll get to the point where there won't be anybody left. I guess that'll make you guys happy because then you won't even have to deal with the little bit of resistance, the little bit of opposition that we're allowed to participate in here in this House that is left.

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You've changed the rules maybe a half-dozen times over the last four years, and each time you've made it more and more difficult for those of us in opposition who have been duly elected by the constituents of the areas we represent to speak our piece, to bring their voice here, to challenge, to bring a different perspective, to shed some light on some things. Each time we change the rules, our ability to do that is diminished, is shut down, is cut back. I think at the end of the day the people who lose out the most are the folks out there in Ontario who had developed over a number of years, through various and different governments—Conservative governments, Liberal governments, New Democratic governments—a system where everybody had a say. Everybody thought that if they had a concern and it was real and genuine and they were sincere about it, and they had an opportunity to bring it to the table, it would be heard by people who cared, who were willing to listen, who wanted to be government, who wanted to roll up their sleeves and do that difficult work that's required of government. But alas, that is disappearing.

Yet again we have today a closure motion in front of us that should be a wake-up call to everybody. The light should go on. A bell should ring. A flag should go up that democracy is again being shut down. The ability of the opposition to participate in debate and speak on a subject as important as balanced budget legislation is being limited. We'll just get on with it, turn government over to the whiz kids and to the Premier's office, and really, who cares?

One of the most obnoxious pieces of that red tape bill that came in here the other day is the diminishing of the role of the P and P committee of cabinet, the priorities and planning committee of cabinet, which used to be that last vestige, that place you could go before a bill actually got the wheels on it and hit the road, to make some change, to bring some reason and rationale to important pieces of public policy. That's going to be virtually wiped out and everything's going to be turned over now to the whiz kids in the Premier's office and they'll do it all.

They won't say it on the public record and they won't say it here in the House, but I know that behind the scenes there are lots of backbenchers over there—and there are a lot of you—who are concerned about that, who don't see that wonderful opportunity that you thought you were going to have when you first got

elected, that I thought I was going to have when I first got elected, to actually make some change, to actually make a difference. That's been taken away from you. There are a lot of you disillusioned; I know that. I wasn't surprised that a whole whack of you decided not run again, but I was even more surprised that some of you actually chose to, given the experience that you must have had: having no input, no ability to participate and being shut out of the equation all the time.

You can imagine how we feel. You who are on the government side, who have some access, who go to caucus meetings, who have an opportunity to speak to cabinet ministers at your wine and cheese parties and your cigar-smoking sessions at some of the elite clubs in this community, you must wonder about how we feel when we come to this place all geared up, ready to debate, to discuss, ready to be government, to do government, to participate in government, and you say: "No, sorry, it's all over. Your time's up. You've had your 20 minutes. You've had your 10 minutes and now it's over. We want to get this through. Christmas is coming. We've got to get out there and organize the parties and plan our trips and get away from here, get out of the bad weather and down to Florida," or over to Europe or wherever it is that you go on your Christmas vacations.

"Get the business of the public domain, get the policy stuff that we need to do here, get the business of government over with so we can get on with that really important stuff, which is to rub shoulders with our friends and benefactors, have them pat us on the back and tell us how wonderful we are for having made the tax cuts and taken money out of education and taken money out of health care, taken money away from those who are poorest and most marginalized in our communities, kick some butt in the welfare line and all those kinds of things," pat you on the back—

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am sitting here listening very attentively to the presentation. I'm trying to figure out what the topic is, what bill we're debating. I haven't heard any reference to the one I think he should be on topic with. Maybe you could have him get on topic and speak to the bill at hand.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order and he's coming to that. I'm encouraged by what I expect to hear.

Mr Martin: He's encouraged by what he's hearing because finally there's somebody standing in this House telling it like it is, telling the truth. If you guys over there would wake up and listen once in a while—

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to refer you to subsection 23(i) in the rules of debate which indicates that the member shall not impute "false or unavowed motives to another member." Basically, the member has been saying that the reason that the government wants to bring this motion is because we want to plan parties and get away for Christmas and so on and so forth. There's no evidence of that at all. That to me is a false and un-

avowed motive, and not a proper subject to debate. I ask the member to withdraw that.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order, but it's—that is, when it is impugned on a member. Therefore, I find that the member's remarks are within the standing rules, and I'd like to recognize the member from Sault Ste Marie.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): You are free to impugn the government all you want.

Mr Martin: Thank you very much. The member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan says I'm free to impugn the government all I want. Goodness gracious, does that ever feel good. Finally, a little relief here. We can say it the way we feel it. We can tell the truth here. We can't be shut down by members over there who feel personally offended when we talk about why they really want to do these things and the actual rational behind what this government is doing.

I know the truth hurts. I know it pinches, but if the shoe fits, you've got to wear it. There's a lot of squealing from that side here this afternoon. We're obviously touching a raw nerve, and they don't like it at all. They never do.

Whenever I get up in this House and I tell the truth and I speak of behalf of my constituents and I call them to task and I put the stuff on the table, you get nothing but verbal garbage coming back: squealing and complaining, points of order, points of personal privilege, another way for them to try to intimidate the opposition, to close us down, to shut us off so that we don't get a chance to speak on behalf of those others out there who would like to have some access to government. But of course these guys don't think they're government, and if you don't think you're government, then access obviously isn't a big deal.

As I was saying before I was so rudely shut down by a couple of the members over there who raised points of order—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I think I would rather not get into the back-and-forth. The members on this side have ridings and they're not "these guys," nor are the ones to my left. It's better if you would make your remarks through the Speaker, to the point and on the bill, and we'll keep things on a level keel that way.

Mr Martin: That's fine. Through you to the chamber, I'd like to go back to where I was when I was cut off. I was saying that the reason the government has a time allocation motion, which is the motion that we're debating here today by the way, member from—Galt, is it, or Mr Galt, the member for—

Mr Galt: Northumberland.

Mr Martin: Northumberland; that's it. I should remember that. A wonderful part of the province. We're debating a time allocation motion, just in case you didn't know. It's a time allocation motion because this government is in a big hurry to get the little bit of business that it has on the agenda done so it can get out of here and begin to party and get together with its friends and benefactors so that they can pat them on the back and

give them all kinds of accolades and say thanks for all the things they have done for them: giving them the big tax breaks, because we know that the tax break that this government has delivered was proportionately and exorbitantly in favour of the well-off as opposed to the middle class and the poor, creating, by the way, a growing gap between the rich and the poor in this province and contributing to the same gap that's growing in this wonderful country that we call Canada.

They gave their friends and benefactors, those people who contributed to their election campaigns, who actually come from the world that these guys came from, who benefit from reduced money spent by government on programs like education and health care—God forbid that we would give any money at all to people who find themselves in some difficulty, in between jobs, by way of social assistance of some sort.

I notice in reports that we hear and from comments made by the Minister of Community and Social Services, who has deemed it fit to grace us here this afternoon, that they're now going to go after welfare people who should happen to have, God forbid, a cottage.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Do you think that's wrong?

Mr Martin: Yes, I do. Absolutely. I go on record as saying that. It's absolutely dead wrong. What you're doing is taking people who are already in difficulty because they are for the most part between jobs and you're saying that before you'll give them a penny to help them through that choppy water, they've got to become completely and totally destitute. They're in poverty already; you're going to drive them further into poverty. They will have not a thing to stand on. This reminds me—

Hon Mr Baird: Point of order.

Mr Martin: The minister has been offended.

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Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I do support welfare recipients not being allowed to own cottages.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Martin: As if we didn't know that, as if we didn't know that this present minister, even when he was simply a backbencher and a member of the government, didn't promote the most right-wing of policies that this government had to offer while he was operating as a member like myself here. Now they've given him the portfolio that allows him to take direct attack at those people who they seem to feel—

Mr Galt: On a point of order, Speaker: I notice in this presentation he's talking about cottages. I'm wondering if he's referring to a second residence and if he supports that those on welfare should have a second residence, if that's what he's referring to.

Interjection: That's a good question.

The Deputy Speaker: It may be a good question; it's not a point of order.

I recognize the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: It's not a point of order, and there seems to be some irritation and anxiety over on that side about what I'm speaking of here.

I'm telling you that I don't think it's right to drive anybody who is in a position of some difficulty financially, perhaps between jobs, perhaps because there was some sickness in the family to themselves or some members of their family, the myriad of reasons, as the member for Niagara Centre said last night, that we might find ourselves in a position of needing some assistance from government, for them to be driven further into poverty by the policies of this government, which would deem it necessary before you could qualify for even an iota of help from a pool of money that you've already contributed to yourself for most of your life by way of your taxes—that you would be driven, totally and completely, into destitution: that you could not own a car, not own a cottage, not own a second dwelling, that you should somehow liquidate that and thereby erode some of what you've built up by way of future investment so that you might have something when you retire by way of a pension.

You're going to put a group of people in this province, you're going to put more and more people in this province, actually, who are finding themselves having a hard time with the economy that you're supporting—because it's all part-time, it's all contract, it's all very competitive now compared to what it was before. People can't get enough jobs to put together to maintain the standard of living that they had before, and they find themselves in difficulty, struggling, trying to make the adjustment. These guys are even going to take away that which they have built up by way of investment over a number of years and completely drive them into the poorhouse and into poverty.

It reminds me so much of some of the reading I've done over the years about other countries which took such a tack in times of difficulty against the poorest of their citizens; who deemed, for example, in Ireland, the country that I came from, that nobody could own anything worth more than £35. The landlord could walk in and offer them £36 for something they had, and they couldn't say a thing about it; they had to sell it, they had to get rid of it. They could walk in when they were having dinner and determine that a piece of furniture that they were sitting on was worth more than whatever it was they were supposed to be allowed to have and could just walk away with it. I'll tell you, we're not far from that in this province today as we see more and more of these kinds of very punitive and destructive and personally repugnant attacks on the most vulnerable and the poor in our communities.

The point I'm making here is that these folks don't want to hold those initiatives, that kind of policy, that approach, what they're doing to this province, up to the light of scrutiny that's supposed to happen here at Queen's Park, in this place, and so they change the rules. Then, even with the change in the rules, they want to cut off debate prematurely, as we're doing here this after-

noon, so that we can't, we can't bring other alternatives to the table. They don't have to answer to anybody except their friends and benefactors, whom they're in a big hurry to get out of here to meet with so that they can laugh and guffaw and point fingers at all those whom they're damaging, all those whom they're destroying, whose lives they're throwing on the scrap heap and who will over time become a larger and larger group.

The gap that's growing in this province between the rich and the poor is becoming dangerously wide. The middle class used to be the bread and butter of all of our communities. They used to be the people who got up in the morning and went to work and felt that it was worth something to do that and that they would have that job until they retired, and that on retirement perhaps, if they were lucky enough to belong to a union that negotiated a good pension package, they would actually have a pension and be able to take care of their families, send them to higher education, not have to worry about health care because it was there for them, because we, as a civilized community of people with the best health care system in the world, had put that in place so that they and their children and their parents could access it; an education system, a series of social programs, communities with libraries and pools and recreation programs that they could all participate in.

The middle class believed that was sacrosanct, that nobody would ever have the nerve to diminish that, to take away from that, to challenge that, to reduce that. They thought that all the work that they'd done, the times that they went out on strike, the negotiations that they participated in on behalf of their fellow workers with their unions, with their bosses, they thought that was all cast in stone and that Ontario was simply going to build on that, have that evolve, make it better, improve it, as other governments did—Liberal and Conservative and New Democratic governments. But not this government.

This government has for the first time in a long, long time shaken to the core the confidence of the middle class. They're not sure any more—the old saying is there but for the grace of God go I—that tomorrow it won't be their turn to have to go to a government office with their hand out to say, "Please, could you give me a few bucks so that I could feed my family, pay the rent, buy the clothes that I need to make sure that my kids are warm in the wintertime?" They have to go to the YMCA and say: "Listen, could I have, just for a time, because I'm in between jobs here, a reduced membership so that my kids can still come and swim at the pool. They love it so much and they've gotten used to it and it would be so terrible, because I don't have a job and the government now has made it really difficult for me to apply for any funding, if my kids have to suffer because of that."

But as I said a few minutes ago, not only is this government going to make it hard for those middle-class people who are being shifted around, who are being restructured, who are losing their jobs, to get the little bit of money that we used to dole out that would take them from here to there; they're being told now that they don't

qualify unless they're absolutely destitute, unless they don't have another thing to sell at the pawnshop, unless they're willing to go out and sell the little cottage. They put in the little extra bit of money, they cashed in the bottles and the kids went out to work, and they took part of that money and the family pooled it and they bought a little cottage so that they could recreate in the summertime like so many of the others do at the lake. Now they find themselves in a squeeze, in a position where they've lost their job, and in this day and age it's not a stretch to say that they lost their job because of the restructuring this government has done. In Sault Ste Marie over the last four years we've lost some 1,500 to 2,000 good-paying jobs, jobs that people aspire to, jobs that the young people of Sault Ste Marie used to come home to work at. They're gone now.

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A lot of those people are finding themselves, primarily because they're older—they're in that 45 to 55 category. It's been a long time since they've been in school. They've not developed a whole lot of other skills, particularly skills that are marketable in the new economy that's out there, and they're finding themselves having a difficult time getting another job, particularly a job that would pay the kind of money that they were getting before, that was maintaining a home. And in my neck of the woods it was not unlikely that a person would have a home, would have a little cottage, a car, a truck, would go fishing and hunting and that kind of thing. That became sort of a benchmark in northern Ontario, having made it to some degree as a middle class, working class citizen in this province.

Now, because they've lost their job and in many instances they are too old to just jump immediately into another job, they need some retraining or skills or whatever. But before they qualify for Ontario Works or for assistance of any kind, this government is asking them to go to the pawnshop and get what they can for everything that they own and spend that, get rid of that. "When you're destitute and you're down on your knees and you've nothing left and you've lost your pride, then come to us and we'll in a very magnanimous way, in a big way as government, give you a little bit to feed your children, to pay the rent if you have a house left at all and to clothe your children." That's what you're doing to the citizens of my community, that's what you're doing to the middle class across this province from town to town, and sooner or later that ghost will visit each and every home in this province. They'll be touched.

Right now they're feeling anxious. There aren't a whole lot of people right now who are feeling confident that what they have now they will have in two years or five years. They don't know, because if they do at this point in time it's probably contract, short-term and with no real confidence that it will be there in the long haul. So they're anxious, they're not sure. They see what you're doing to some of these other folk, they see what you're doing to the welfare people and some of them are saying, "They had it too good for too long." A lot of

those people were never there, but they'll be there soon, or there is the chance that they may be there soon and they're beginning to look at it twice.

I came here in 1990 thinking that I was going to change the world, thinking that I was going to make a difference, and I wasn't here long before I began to realize that yes, it was important that I had personal aspirations for myself and my community and the people I represented, but that there were a whole lot of other people here with the same motivations, with the same very real and sincere desire to make improvements, to change the system, and that I had to work with them, work within the system, take advantage of the opportunities that were there to participate in debate, to work on committee, to sit down behind the scenes with my own colleagues and members of the government and the opposition and find ways together to move forward the agenda that was building on something that was there already, not destroy, not tear down, not belittle and most of all not to attack the most vulnerable out there.

I enjoyed the five years that I had as a backbencher in government working with people, working with the government, working with the opposition, but I have to tell you in the last four years it has been a frustrating, difficult and oftentimes depressing exercise to try to do government with a group who doesn't believe that they are government. I suggest to you that what we have here tonight, what we're debating tonight is another example of those roadblocks, of that frustration, of this government that doesn't want to be government attempting to stifle the democratic process in this province.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): Today I rise as the MPP for Scarborough Southwest to support the government's Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act and the need for its quick passage. Before I go into my speech on that, I just want to comment on a couple of things that the member for Sault Ste Marie indicated. First off he talked about the rule changes. The fact of the matter is that if the rules hadn't been changed he wouldn't have had the opportunity to speak today, because in the last election the NDP went from 17 seats down to nine. They lost official party status. If the rules hadn't been changed he wouldn't have had an opportunity to speak today, and I think he should have recognized that fact.

He also mentioned that in 1990 he came to Queen's Park hoping to change the world and he said he didn't change the world. What he did is that he changed the province: 32 more tax hikes in this province, \$50 billion added to the debt. That's the very reason we need a bill like the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act passed here in Ontario.

This is truly landmark legislation that will protect Ontario taxpayers and families from irresponsible government spending. In other words, it will protect people from governments like the NDP from 1990 to 1995, and the Liberals from 1985 to 1990. It will prohibit Ontario governments from spending more money than they have or from arbitrarily increasing or introducing new taxes to

help make up deficit spending, without prior approval from the electorate. This is very important not only in Scarborough Southwest but in Perth-Middlesex.

I think it's important that we look back at history, the history of our province. In the past 35 years, Ontario has had balanced budgets or surpluses only four times. Under Progressive Conservative governments, balanced budgets or surpluses were achieved in 1965-66, 1966-67 and 1969-70.

In 1989-90, under the Peterson Liberals, the government took credit for balancing the budget. We all remember that moment in history, and it was just that: a moment in history; it was very briefly balanced. In 1990, when the NDP were elected by the people of Ontario, the finance minister, Floyd Laughren, could not find the money. Where it went, who knows?

What's important is that this bill contains provisions similar to Manitoba's breakthrough legislation on balanced budgets. One of the provisions of that bill was to encourage governments to run surpluses in good years. In this way, an accumulated net surplus could be taken into account to offset amounts by which expenditures exceed revenues in later, less buoyant fiscal times. This is no different from what individuals, families and businesses must do to manage their finances in Scarborough Southwest or in Perth-Middlesex. The old adage of saving for a rainy day is time-tested and true.

After the first year of a prohibited deficit, the Premier and the members of cabinet would be docked 25% of the stipend they receive for their work as cabinet members. This penalty would increase to 50% after a second consecutive deficit, and after each consecutive deficit thereafter. This makes the commitment to balanced budgets very compelling indeed.

While governments would be expected to maintain balanced budgets, this bill would give cabinet the opportunity to fix a very small deficit, of less than 1% of revenue, by running an equal or greater surplus the following year. In this situation, cabinet salaries would not be docked unless the government fails to run the offsetting surplus the following year. If the government runs a deficit greater than 1% of revenue, the penalties would apply immediately after the tabling of public accounts.

This bill would require the government to get the approval of voters before it could introduce a new tax or raise the rates of a wide range of taxes. If the government wants to seek voter approval through a referendum to authorize a tax rate increase or a new tax, this bill would require a clear, concise and impartially worded question capable of a yes or no answer. It would also require an estimate of the revenue impact of the proposed increase or new tax.

Alternatively, parties could seek voter approval through a general election by filing an official notice of their intent to raise tax rates or to impose new taxes, if elected. Once again, the statement of intent to increase tax rates or impose new taxes must be clear and concise

so that the voters know exactly what they're being asked to approve.

This legislation would play a major role in keeping the provincial budget balanced in our province of Ontario. This is what the people of Scarborough Southwest want; this is what the people all across Ontario want. They want to see a budget balanced and they want to see that budget continue to be balanced or be in a surplus position.

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You should note that Ontario currently spends more than \$18,000 per minute just to service its debt. That's \$300 per second to service the debt in this province. That's outrageous. Public debt interest of \$9.8 billion during the year 1999-2000 is almost half of what the province will spend on important services such as health care, which will be over \$20.2 billion during this same fiscal year.

By the end of March 1999, our debt had reached \$109 billion; that's more than 50 times greater than our debt in 1964, eating up crucial revenues that could have been used to pay for services for Ontarians.

During the lost decade from 1985 to 1995, consecutive Liberal and NDP governments in Ontario levied 65 separate tax increases on the victimized and demoralized taxpayers of our province, including an unprecedented 11 increases to personal income tax.

During the course of debate on this bill, many of my colleagues have done an admirable job of reviewing the infamous roll call of Liberal and NDP tax hikes, but I only have 15 minutes and I couldn't possibly go through each of those 65 tax hikes, so I'm not even about to do that.

It seems that nothing escaped their spend-and-grab approach of governing. We saw increases in everything from personal income tax rates to income tax surcharges, to gasoline and fuel taxes, to the employer health tax, to the commercial concentration taxes and on and on and on it went. During this journey into the black hole, we experienced an unprecedented barrage of increased and new taxes. Despite the fact that these governments shamelessly piled more and more financial burden on to the backs of our citizens, they continued on a near-drunken orgy of wasteful and frivolous spending, going back to the well for more and more whenever they wanted. The result was the highest tax levels in our history, but also an equally disgraceful deficit of \$11.3 billion.

At a time when our economy was in trouble, growth and investment were becoming distant memories and consumer confidence and spending were down, what did our provincial leaders do to inspire confidence and return Ontario to prosperity?

Interjection: Taxes.

Mr Newman: That's right, they increased taxes in our province. And what was the effect? The effect was to drive the province into deeper despair. We in Ontario had become one of the highest-taxed jurisdictions in all of North America. Both individuals and companies were

finding it increasingly difficult to keep their heads above water. Is it any wonder that businesses were looking elsewhere to invest and unemployment was at the highest levels in decades?

Ontario, long regarded as the economic engine of Canada, the province of opportunity, was sputtering and gasping, desperately in need of a major tune-up and engine overhaul. In 1995, the people of Ontario and the people of Scarborough said: "Enough is enough. If we as individual taxpayers have to tighten our belts and live within our means, then why should government behave differently?" They were right in 1995 and they were right again in 1999.

If government was spending more than it was bringing in, the answer wasn't to simply raise taxes yet again, but rather to get spending under control and to look for ways of reducing the burden on our citizens, not adding to it.

As Premier Harris said in the Common Sense Revolution, it was the time for government to take the same types of changes that all of us had to make in our families and in our jobs. He went on to say that it was time to take a fresh look at government, to reinvent the way it works, to make it work for people, to bring common sense to how government operates.

The confidence placed in this government by the people of Ontario was not taken lightly in 1995 and was not taken lightly again in 1999.

Subsequent to taking office, the Mike Harris government has introduced 99 tax cuts since the throne speech in 1995. In fact, during the first three years of the mandate, the provincial income tax rate dropped by 30%, as promised, with half the cut coming in the first year. These reductions in the tax rate gave Ontarians the lowest income tax rate in Canada, resetting our income tax rate back to 1976 levels.

Ontario's 30% personal income tax cut is putting more money in the pockets of hard-working families. In fact, what it's doing is letting those hard-working families keep more of what they earned in the first place. But more needs to be done to improve these families' take-home pay. The taxpayer protection legislation is intended to make sure that no provincial government can, in the future, turn around and hike tax rates or create new taxes without the people's permission.

During the recent campaign, our Blueprint commitment outlined an additional reduction of 20% in the personal provincial income tax rate and a 20% cut in the provincial share of residential property taxes, the latter of which will return approximately \$500 million to the taxpayers of Ontario. Despite the significant reductions in taxes which our people must pay, the sound financial management exhibited by this government has resulted in a plummeting deficit and greater consumer and investor confidence in Ontario as a place to live and do business.

How many jobs have been created in that time? Over 614,000 net new jobs since the throne speech of 1995. I think it's important to note that in this past month, October 1999, some 36,400 net new jobs were created in our province. In September of this year, 28,800 net new

jobs were created in our province. That is proving that tax cuts do indeed create jobs.

However, the greatest single achievement of the Mike Harris government, which will be part of its legacy, is that it is now proven that despite major reductions in tax levels and increased emphasis and spending on critical services like education and health care, government can live within its means. The days of unchallenged increases in government spending followed by unchallenged increases in taxes are over and must never be allowed to return to this province.

This government, in its actions, has shown an unprecedented level of respect for the taxpayers of this province, never before seen in Canada and never before seen in our province. It has recognized the hard work and commitment that each of our citizens must exhibit to raise a family and to maximize his or her personal potential. That effort must not be taken lightly. By frittering away hard-earned tax dollars on wasteful or unnecessary government spending or programs, we are being disrespectful to the millions of men and women whom we purport to represent and serve. We must spend our tax revenue prudently and wisely, ensuring that the taxpayers of this province are getting the maximum return on their investment.

Make no mistake about it: It is an investment, and the taxpayers of this province are the investors. We must never lose sight of that, and that something of value must be made in return for that investment. That's what the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act recognizes: that the taxpayer of Ontario is not merely a source of tax revenue but also an investor and a shareholder with a stake in how the government conducts its business. If a government should ever find itself in a position where it cannot live within its budget and believes it must run a deficit or seek additional tax revenue, it must go to its investors for approval.

As I previously indicated, the act proposes that future Ontario governments receive the voters' permission before introducing any bill that imposes any new tax or increases the rate of any existing tax. This approval would be sought through either a general election or a province-wide referendum.

The combined balanced-budget and taxpayer protection provisions of this bill make the legislation one of the toughest and most comprehensive of its kind. Ontario would have to balance its budget each fiscal year, as do most other provinces with balanced-budget legislation. Ontario's legislation would have the highest penalties. As I mentioned, cabinet members would be penalized 25% of their cabinet salary for the first deficit, 50% for the second consecutive deficit and 50% for each consecutive deficit thereafter.

The government would be held to the accounting policies in place at the start of the fiscal year in determining just how that budget had been balanced. It wouldn't be able to circumvent the legislation by changing the rules halfway through the game. We've seen what happens in this province when that happens. In other

words, we would not see a return to the accounting procedure known as Petersonomics.

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The Ontario taxpayer protection provisions would be the most comprehensive in all of Canada, going far beyond the provisions in both Manitoba and Alberta. The need for this legislation was clearly enunciated by Premier Harris and Progressive Conservative candidates across this province during the last campaign. Taxpayer protection was indeed spelled out in our Blueprint, leaving no doubt as to where our commitment was in this area. The taxpayers of this province responded by giving Premier Harris the first consecutive majority government since Premier John Robarts, who, I might add, led this province during the last undisputed balanced-budget years.

The taxpayers of this province have been taken for granted for far too long. They are now, with this bill, should it be passed, being given the authority to say no. They can say no to a government which cannot keep its financial house in order. The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act is a very powerful piece of legislation and is a momentous step in the continuing evolution of government in this province. It recognizes that democracy is far more than the right to vote in an election. It is also the need for accountability.

Scarborough is a community of hard-working citizens who have twice elected me to represent them at Queen's Park. In 1995 I was elected to represent Scarborough Centre, and in 1999 I was elected to represent the people of Scarborough Southwest. They have entrusted me to ensure that government continues to display financial integrity in how it conducts its business. They have entrusted me to ensure that they are not taken for granted and to ensure that government becomes financially accountable. They have entrusted me that we never return to the days of spiralling spending and relentless tax hikes that we saw during the Liberal and NDP years from 1985 through 1995.

I wholeheartedly support this bill and the motion before the House today. I believe that it is not only the right thing to do but is an absolutely critical and essential thing to do for the taxpayers of our province.

In the few minutes that I have been speaking, Ontarians have paid approximately \$275,000 in interest payments to service the debt in this province. This is a legacy that we leave to our children. We must be able to free them of this suffocating burden, and it can be and will be done.

The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act will pave the way for future generations of Ontarians, who will once again be able to enjoy the benefits of living and working in the province of opportunity where their hard work and efforts are respected by those they elect to represent them.

The opposition parties really have no legitimate argument for voting against this bill or for voting against this motion today. They were there on June 3 when the results were tallied. They know that this legislation was

the fundamental plank in our platform, and the people of Ontario soundly endorsed that platform.

We have listened as they used the debate on this important and desperately needed legislation to espouse their views on a number of unrelated subjects. They wouldn't stand up and say, "I support balanced-budget and taxpayer protection legislation." They wouldn't say it; they talked on a variety of other topics. But it is time to move on. The people of this province have endorsed the need for this legislation, and we owe it to them to pass this bill and this motion without further delay.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I am glad to join the debate and have a few minutes in the House to speak on this so-called "history-making" piece of legislation, as the member from Scarborough Southwest mentioned, and this momentous occasion.

What I didn't hear in any of the government side presentations is that we are dealing with closure, if you will. Cut the debate: no more talking, no more speaking. Cut the democratic process, let alone the content of the proposed legislation. This is what we are supposed to be debating now. I ask the Premier, if it is so important to him and his so-called government—which he says is not the government, by the way. If it's not the government then why does he come up with such a proposal? If it is so important to him to present this earth-shattering, so-important piece of legislation, why are they cutting the debate?

This is what we are discussing. Today is the last day that we can speak on this legislation. But I agree on one aspect: that it is an important piece of legislation, and I'm asked, Mr Speaker, not only to cut the debate today and vote on it—and it's going to carry, of course, because it is politically correct—even though I have to say that I remember our NDP side, back in 1997 during the committee hearings, said, "It is worthwhile to have a democratic process, so we would support it." I saw them the other day just going after the Liberals and saying, "The Liberals are changing their mind and supporting it." Well, hold on a second here. What did they say when this bill went to the committee?

But having said that, if this was so important for the government—this is not the first time we have been faced with the threat of this proposed legislation. We have quotes here back to 1990 or 1992, back in 1993 and back in 1995 from the now Premier, Mr Harris, saying, "Yes, in order to do certain things, that we give people power, that we follow the democratic process, that we do everything openly, we've got to have referendums."

It's interesting that memory is so short even on the government side, because in the 1995 election the Premier said, "Not even one penny will I cut from the education system, not one cent from the health care system." The debate in this House today revolves around \$800 million from a leaked government document, which the minister did say in the House was a leaked document. They want to cut another \$800 million from the school

system, from the education system, from our kids, from the classroom, from the textbooks.

Mr Harris, why don't you go to the people? You want call a referendum? Well, do it, but don't cause another \$800-million cut, because eventually somebody will have to pay—and you know who's going to pay for it—before you go through with this piece of horrendous legislation. It is supposed to increase accountability, which it does not, because that would call this a piece of legislation to hide what's behind it. If you are a good government, what's the problem? If you're a good leader, Mr Harris—and you're not—then why do you need this legislation? If your government is such a good government, then why do you need this legislation so that before imposing taxes or cuts you've got to go to a referendum? Why didn't you do it back in 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998? You did all the dirty work before and now you're coming and saying, "Well, for any tax increase, for taxpayers' protection, for balanced budgets, we are going to do that."

How silly I have to say it is that once they have done all the cuts, they have decimated our education system, they have totally decimated our health care system, now they're coming back and saying, "Before we do anything else, we are going to introduce this legislation."

You know what's interesting—and the members from the government of course have to support it. They have to speak their language. It is not aggressive but progressive language in their view, and when the member from Scarborough Southwest says, "You know, Mr Speaker, in the last few minutes I have been on my feet it's cost taxpayers \$275,000," I am totally outraged. This government has borrowed every single penny and our debt went up from \$88 billion or \$98 billion to \$124 billion, and they have the gall to get up in the House and say that the few minutes that we are talking in this House is costing \$250,000.

1700

Let me ask the Premier: Isn't it a shame that they can say so openly—I mean, people are not stupid out there. They are not silly, like they would have us believe. If it's costing us \$250,000 for a few minutes in this House, why then not pay off the deficit, completely balance it and start to pay off the debt instead of going to borrow the money?

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: Oh yes, indeed. Let me say, just for the interest of our member, just prior to the last budget, what did they say? "Our members for a long time have known that deficits and debts are really tomorrow's taxes." If I'm not wrong, even Mr Harris used to say that some other time, some other place. Who did say that? That was Judith Andrew of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This is a wonderful quote: "I have to question, really, the wisdom of the dramatic and drastic tax cuts in light of deficit financing. It is not how we would have gone about it. In fact, it is not the way we did go about it." That was Ralph Klein, the Conservative Premier of Alberta.

I had 17 minutes and we can't do justice to debate, any one of us in the House, to discuss the merits of closure on this particular piece of legislation. But it's most unfortunate that the government continues to impose closure, to cut off debate, when they consider that this piece of legislation is a very important one. Mr Speaker, I thank you for the time given to me today.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm pleased to participate in the debate today. Here we are again, starting off the session in a fine way, dealing with a time allocation motion on behalf of the government to try and cut off any further debate on Bill 7. My understanding is that there has not been extensive debate on this bill to date. The government is in a position where in fact the Liberal Party is supporting its position, thinks that it's okay that we have balanced-budget legislation but don't deal with health and social and economic and environmental deficits that come and that you can't deal with under this kind of legislation. So I'm surprised at the move of the government today particularly to stop the debate. I'm more surprised that the government has also included in its time allocation motion notice that there will be no public hearings on this bill. The government has no interest whatsoever in taking this out to the folks even for a few days, because a few days of public debate has become the tradition under this group, three or four if you're really lucky, depending on what the issue is, and if you're exceptionally lucky, it might get out of Toronto, in the rarest of circumstances.

I don't understand why the government wouldn't want to take this out and talk to the people and get their view about this particular bill. I think the points that we have been raising, in terms of an NDP caucus, are concerns and points that are shared by a number of people who live in the province of Ontario, particularly people who do see that the cuts this government has made to health, to education, to the environment will have a long-term impact. They are important deficits as well, just as important as the budget deficit that the government likes to harp on. I think people would like to have an opportunity to raise the concern of why it is that the government, in this bill which requires that we go out and have a referendum before we raise things like personal income tax, gas tax etc, wouldn't have included user fees, for example, or tuition fee hikes or even, what the government has been famous for doing, the downloading of costs associated with services that it has dumped on municipalities.

I think the reason the government doesn't want to have public hearings on Bill 7, the reason why in the time allocation motion we are dealing with today it says specifically there will be none of that, is that the government doesn't want to hear from people who are concerned not only about the short-term political hit that the government is trying to make with this bill but the long-term, significant, permanent problems that we will have to deal with when the sole focus is trying to deal with a budget deficit with no regard whatsoever for what that means for the health deficit, the education deficit, the

environmental deficit, the community deficit that this government has started and continues in Ontario.

So let me speak to those concerns that I think the public would like to raise if the government would have public hearings but which the government has completely undermined in its putting forward of the closure motion that we have here today.

I said the bill focuses on the budget deficit. The government has harped on that all through its debate on this bill and, to the detriment of the environment, health and education and communities, doesn't focus at all, doesn't even talk about what the costs will be to those important things, things that people in this province feel very strongly about too. If you look at where health care and education rate in most polling that is going on right now, they are at the top or in second place.

The government has come forward and said that without a referendum, without going to the people, things like personal income tax, corporate taxes, sales tax, the employer health tax, gas and fuel tax cannot be raised. They can only be raised when the government goes to the people in a referendum or when the government makes that a particular platform in its election platform. If they get elected, then they would sense that that would give them permission to go forward.

It's interesting that the government doesn't talk about all those other deficits. If you look at what the auditor had to say yesterday, it is clear that the cuts the government has made to try to finance its tax cut, which benefits the wealthiest 6% of people in the province to the detriment of the rest of us, it's very clear that there has already been a very significant health, education and environmental deficit which has begun and which will accumulate under this government as a result of this legislation.

It is clear that people don't want to pay more taxes. If you talk to them in a referendum about doing that, they will not want to do that. The only way this government and others that follow will be able to deal with those kinds of things, especially in bad economic times, is to make more cuts to the things that are really important.

If you're trying to balance your budget in a recession period and you're trying to meet the needs of all those who have been affected by that recession, specifically those who lose their jobs—and there were hundreds of thousands of those in the early 1990s—the only way you can deal with the needs of those people, most of whom ended up on social assistance during that time, is to raise the deficit. There was no other way to pay to meet the needs that as government we had a responsibility to meet.

What this government will do, once this legislation is passed, is that when we have increasing health care needs—and we do; they're out there because the population is growing—when we have increasing environmental needs—and we do, because in Toronto in July you can't breathe on the city streets—and when we have increasing needs in education—and we do, because if Ontario is going to be competitive in the next millennium, we have to give the best advantage to our

students—the only way the government's going to have to meet all of those needs will be to cut in those areas. I'd be surprised if the government even went out on a referendum to try to poll people with respect to raising taxes. What will happen as the needs grow is that there will be no way to pay for them, and what you're going to see is increasing cuts in areas of priorities that people really care about.

Look at what's already happened in health care. I refer to the auditor's report yesterday, two brief examples in health care. The auditor reported yesterday that during their audit of Cancer Care Ontario, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, they found that certain standards set to ensure that people in Ontario receive high-quality cancer care were not being met.

"Only 32% of patients requiring radiation therapy received it within the recommended four weeks from referral.

"The Ontario breast screening program had insufficient mechanisms to monitor whether screening centres were meeting required performance standards and to ensure that high-risk women were identified for screening."

These are just two of the items out of health care that he found.

With respect to hospitals, this is what the auditor said. Examples of audit findings that can be linked to the problems associated with hospital restructuring were:

(1) "based on hospital estimates, the capital costs for hospital restructuring would increase to approximately \$3.9 billion from the \$2.1 originally estimated from the Health Services Restructuring Commission

(2) "one hospital reported that, due to a shortage of operating funds," from the Ministry of Health, "it was not fully utilizing new facilities that cost approximately \$110 million to construct. Four of its eight operating rooms were idle while local residents were forced to travel to other centres for specialized care."

That is the deficit in health care that we are starting to see as this government has diverted funds to its income tax cuts instead of paying for priority items.

Look at education, if people don't think we have a deficit growing. Ontario has the dubious distinction of ranking number one now in terms of its supports to colleges and universities: We are dead last in terms of the transfer payments we provide to those institutions. At a time when we know education at the post-secondary level will be more important than ever for Ontarians to be competitive in the next millennium, we rank dead last.

In terms of cuts to schools, it was interesting that the leaked document that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities referred to today shows another proposal for cuts to primary and secondary schools, this time in the order of \$800 million: \$94 million from computers in classrooms; \$244 million from school boards over three years; another \$160 million from colleges and universities over three years; another \$30 million over two years in funds for textbooks and learning materials; an undetermined amount for schools with children who are

deaf, blind and learning disabled. And then the kicker: Private universities can be established where students would pay more for loans, and of course the government would have no exposure at all because they wouldn't provide any funding. That's the kind of education deficit we've got underway, one that continues.

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I heard the government try and deny today that this document existed, and then I heard the minister say it was a leaked document. I really wonder if anyone out there can believe for one moment that this wasn't done at the behest of the government. Someone tooling away in some ministry somewhere just didn't dream up this document for cabinet to consider. Of course cabinet directed that this document be prepared. Of course cabinet is looking at further cuts to education. That's the only way they can continue to finance the tax cut, another 20% the government had in its Blueprint.

Those are the kinds of deficits. If you look at the environment it's the same thing. The province of Ontario is now second-last in terms of its environmental record, not just in Canada, in North America. Isn't that a record to be proud of, that we are second from the bottom in 10 provinces in Canada and 50 states? What does that say about this government's commitment to clean air, clean water, all those things that impact on good health care that then impact on how productive your community can be? We have got a government, in its Bill 7, that focuses exclusively on a balanced budget and does nothing to deal with the deficit it is creating, has created and will continue to create in those other important areas, a deficit that is going to get worse, because in bad times, when the government has to look for money somewhere and it can't go back to the taxpayers for that, it's going to make even deeper, more significant, more serious cuts in those very areas that most Ontarians consider to be a priority.

It's interesting that the legislation doesn't talk at all about the need for a referendum for user fees and for tuition fee increases. I wonder why that is. If you look at it, the government would be hard-pressed to deny that it has been in those areas where they have been dumping on to the local taxpayer as they have made their cuts. The government makes cuts in terms of health care and then turns around and tells seniors, "You can pay a \$2 copayment fee" or "You can pay a copayment fee and you can pay the dispensing fee as well. That's the new surprise we have brought you, thanks to Mike Harris." The government turns around and can say to students, "Under our regime, tuition has probably increased 60%, but that's OK; students can afford that." We are now entering a regime where unless your family is fabulously wealthy, you won't be able to access post-secondary education in the next number of years, but that's OK.

It's interesting that the government has no intention whatsoever of going to the people and getting the people's opinion about the whole new, wide-ranging regime of user fees that it has brought on to the taxpayers. Of course they don't want to go in that direction, because it's those same kinds of user fees the govern-

ment's going to have to depend on. When it can't find any money in a bad time to fund health, education and community services, the government's going to have to rely on new user fees, increased user fees to pay for some of those costs, because they won't be able to get it from general revenues.

It's interesting as well that the government through the bill makes no reference to a need to have a referendum before the provincial government dumps services, and then costs, onto municipalities. You'll recall that most of the legislative time in this place in 1997 was spent on dealing with all the legislation the government brought forward to dump child care, to dump municipal transit, to dump highways, to dump police services in unorganized areas, any number of new services, new costs, onto municipalities and hence onto the local property taxpayer.

It's interesting that the government completely ignored the need to have a referendum before it dumps further services and hence further costs on to municipal taxpayers. The Premier has said before that there's only one taxpayer, and he is right. Why is it that he doesn't want to hear from that one taxpayer when his government proposes to increase user fees, when his government proposes to increase tuition fees, when his government proposes to dump services on to municipalities so that local property taxes will have to be increased in order to provide those services? Why doesn't the government want to hear from people in a referendum then?

I submit to you it's because those are the very mechanisms this government has used during their first mandate and that they have every intention of continuing to use to meet the health and environmental and education deficits that are growing, and that they will continue to incur when they can't go back to taxes in order to raise the money that's going to be necessary, particularly in those down times.

I think it's interesting that the government that talks about how we should hear from the population with respect to personal income tax increases, with respect to gas tax and sales tax increases, doesn't want to hear from the people when they want to talk about user fees, government user fees, new ones, increased ones, doesn't want to hear from the people. When we talk about increased tuition fees—60% under the Conservatives—it doesn't want to hear from the people, and when we talk about how everyone's property taxes have increased directly as a result of the changes the government made in 1997 when it downloaded services and costs onto our municipalities. Of course, the government doesn't want to hear from people because the people would say quite a bit about how they're concerned about how the government on the one hand tries to do a big political ploy by saying, "We're going to talk to you about raising your personal income tax," but doesn't want to hear from them when they're talking about all the new user fees they have to pay.

My own community in the last two years has had a new water fee and a new sewer fee directly as a result of the cuts the government made to municipalities. I'm not

alone. There are thousands of people who are paying new fees, whether it's seniors paying for drugs when they didn't before, students paying increased tuition fees, and a whole host of new user fees across every branch of this government to make up for the cuts the government has made in other areas to pay for the tax cut.

It's a real shame that the government doesn't want to take this bill out to hear from the people. It's a shame that in the motion that's before us today the government specifically blocks that, doesn't allow it to happen. It's a shame that the government doesn't want to hear any more opposition from the New Democrats with respect to this bill. I think that a number of people have serious concerns about what the government is trying to do, which is a cheap political trick, in essence, where the social and the health and the environmental and the educational deficits will continue to grow while the government tries to focus solely on a budget deficit. When it gets into a bad time and has nowhere to go to raise money to deal with those important things, people will pay new user fees, higher tuition, any new range of new property taxes to cover up for the government's mistakes.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I am pleased to rise this afternoon and speak in support of Bill 7, the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act. As the MPP for Guelph-Wellington, I am particularly pleased to be back in the House representing two new townships, the townships of Puslinch and Guelph-Eramosa.

This bill is divided into two main parts. The first part is the Taxpayer Protection Act, and this part will require government to get the approval of people before it introduces a new tax or any increase in a wide range of taxes.

The second part, the Balanced Budget Act, will assure the taxpayers of Ontario that no government ever again can spend more than it can afford. It proposes that in the fiscal year of 2001-02 a deficit may only be run in extraordinary circumstances such as natural disasters or war.

This legislation is among the toughest and most comprehensive in Canada. It has the highest penalties; for instance, cabinet ministers will be held personally responsible. A deficit can only be allowed, as I said, in extraordinary circumstances.

Governments will be held to the accounting policies that will be in place at the beginning of the fiscal year. In other words, they can't change the rules midway through the year—and, as I said, more comprehensive than any other legislation across Canada.

My constituents in Guelph-Wellington are conscientious and they work very hard to take care of their families, but they are no different from most families all across this province who are facing an increasing tax burden. In 1998, a quarter of the average Ontario household's income was turned over in federal and provincial taxes—one quarter. This is a 17% increase from 1980. That includes things like personal income tax, employment insurance, the Canada pension plan and other taxes.

Between 1985 and 1995, Ontarians saw their provincial income taxes increase 65 times and were never once asked if they agreed to these. Here are some examples of these increases: In 1985, the personal income tax was jacked up to 50% of the basic federal tax. Then, adding insult to injury, they said they had to pay another 3% surtax on any tax over \$5,000. In 1988, the gasoline tax was increased by 1%, the retail sales tax increased by another 1%. In 1989, the gasoline tax was hiked again by two cents per litre; personal income tax was raised 53%; those of us who were in small business certainly know about the job-killing employer health tax; the tire tax was imposed; the commercial concentration levy was imposed, all by a Liberal government at a time when Ontario's economy was booming.

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When the voters finally got their say, they told David Peterson what they thought of that tax grab. They got rid of him but, regretfully, were stuck with the taxes.

Our government believes that it's important to do things differently. That's why I'm proud to be part of a government that has reduced taxes 99 times since 1995. Now that we are finally getting hold of the reins of a skyrocketing taxation, we want to make sure that these detrimental patterns of tax and spend don't start up again in the future. The taxpayers are always the losers.

That's why we are proposing that governments must ask for consent to increase or introduce new taxes. This proposed legislation will force parties of all stripes to be honest about what they propose. If a big new program is being suggested with no tax increases mentioned, voters have to know that something is going to be reduced and will have an opportunity to ask the tough questions that prospective governments should have the courage to answer. This increased transparency will make it easier for voters to understand their options at election time. This legislation will go a long way to teach voters that their votes won't be disregarded in the future. This is very important. I believe that this legislation will go a long way to reduce voter apathy and cynicism in Ontario.

The Balanced Budget Act is part of this Legislature's promise to the people of Ontario that we will no longer spend indiscriminately. To back up that pledge, each member of the executive council or cabinet will have to turn over a quarter of his or her salary if the budget isn't balanced; 50% if it isn't balanced the following year. Talk about putting your money where your mouth is. We are sincere in turning this around.

A balanced budget is important. In the last 35 years Ontario has only had four balanced budgets, and the result of that is that the accumulated debt to each child now born in Ontario is \$28,711. That's the combined total of the federal debt and the provincial debt: \$19,139 attributed to the federal government; \$9,572 attributed to the provincial debt. These numbers are shameful. That is why we need balanced budget legislation, to safeguard the future of our province's finances, so that never again can, for instance, an NDP government be able to run up a \$49-billion tab in just four short years, or, like the Liberal

government before them, overspend their budget each year by \$300 million, up to \$2 billion.

Right now our province is struggling, spending \$18,000 per minute just to service our debt. This cannot continue, and our government knows that. That's why we have been diligently and steadfastly moving to reduce the deficit each year, from in 1995 over \$11 billion, down to \$8 billion, then to \$5 billion, then to \$3 billion. Next year, for the first time in decades, under our government's leadership, we will have a balanced budget in Ontario.

Taxpayers' pleas have been heard all across this country. All of the provincial governments and the federal government have achieved or are on their way to achieving a balanced budget.

Balanced budget legislation is not new. Alberta and Manitoba both have this type of legislation. Our proposed legislation is more comprehensive because, for instance, Alberta's only applies to general sales tax and Manitoba's only applies to new and more taxes.

How governments have achieved a balanced budget is a topic of debate. We believe that the right approach is through tax reductions to stimulate the economy and increase revenues, combined with reduced spending, and that is what we have implemented. The federal Liberal government, on the other hand, has been balancing its budgets primarily on the backs of thriving provincial economies like Ontario's. It's very interesting that just this week the provincial premiers of every political party once again are requesting that Paul Martin respond fairly.

To achieve their surplus, the federal Liberal government has cut nearly \$20 billion a year from the Canada health and social transfer since 1994. Add this up and this is very close to the \$80 billion of their projected \$95-billion surplus over the next five years. In the meantime, they have paid only cursory attention to the huge tax burden shared by Canadians. Surely, he can find room in the \$95-billion surplus to give Canadians meaningful tax relief.

I know in my riding of Guelph-Wellington constituents only know that they keep paying. They are very pleased that the Progressive Conservative government has worked hard to lift that tax burden from their shoulders. The irony, of course, is that the more we seem to work hard to reduce taxes for the people of Ontario, the more the federal Liberal government keeps adding taxes. The loser is always the poor taxpayer. We believe the federal Liberal government must take action to address the drag on our country's economic performance, and going on another spending spree is not the answer.

In this bill, one of the most interesting provisions is the legislation referring to the referendum. For the first time since the days of temperance, Ontarians could go to the polls to direct their provincial government's actions. Members of the House might be interested in knowing that the bill states clearly that a referendum question must be "clear, concise and impartial," and that any proposed questions would be evaluated by the chief election officer to ensure that it meets those criteria. This is an important

provision to make sure that any referendum held in our province will not face the questions and mysteries that have dogged other referendums in other jurisdictions. The vote would also be held under rules similar to a provincial election campaign.

It is also worthy to note that a referendum would not be necessary if during an election campaign the leader of one of the recognized parties provided the chief election officer with a statement that the party intends to raise or introduce a new tax if elected to government. Voters should never have to write governments a blank cheque every four or five years. Forming a government should never be considered a licence to reach into the pockets of taxpayers whenever it's convenient. This legislation will require governments to justify a tax increase to the most important people: the people who pay. Ontarians will have the opportunity to weigh the benefits of a proposed tax increase against its cost, and they will have a say before a tax is imposed, not during an election years afterwards.

This legislation asks that governments of any party treat the dollars they receive from taxpayers with the same care they would treat their own personal dollars. We are demanding that future Ontario governments be responsible with the money that taxpayers entrust to them. That's an important word: "entrust." We are asking that governments cannot any longer get themselves into a hole and try to bail themselves out by taking more money from Ontarians without consent.

The good people in my riding of Guelph-Wellington work hard and live by the rules. They know they must pay taxes to ensure that the services they need are delivered. But in Guelph-Wellington the people know the difference between need and want. In their own households and in their own businesses they make daily decisions about expenditures and reductions so that they can live within their means and meet their family's needs. They expect no less from their government.

Many people in my riding are from Scottish heritage, and of course people are always making jokes about the Scottish being tight with their money. In fact, frugality is not a bad thing. When we are elected to this House, we are expected by all Ontarians to be frugal, to be wise and to be fair.

My constituents know that their standards of living have improved over the past few generations, but they are never satisfied when they see evidence of government waste. When I speak to constituents to talk about the fact that \$9.8 billion of our entire provincial revenue, almost a fifth of everything we have to spend in this province on services, is wasted paying interest payments on the debt, quite frankly they are appalled. In Guelph-Wellington this is viewed as wrong and it is unsupportable. This is money they know that we are simply throwing away, money that we cannot invest in roads or hospitals or schools. The debt is now \$109 billion, 50 times greater than it was in 1964 and literally eats up crucial revenues that would be better directed in other places.

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They are also angry in that I think my constituents have felt over the years a sense of betrayal. When elected to this House, we are all entrusted to act in our constituents' best interests and for the provincial good as a whole. Running up unmanageable debt on their behalf without their permission robs them of future possibilities. It's no different than if someone were to run up a huge bill on your credit card and expect you to pay when you had your own different obligations. But it is worse than that, because they know that the debt and the deficit are so huge that managing and reducing them is a daunting task. It means, in many cases, saying no to services and programs which some may have become accustomed to or which in fact should be offered.

I found interesting—I have a list here—some of the things that have been suggested and will take place in the 1999 budget initiative that add up to the money that would be, for instance, spent each year on the interest for the debt. These are some of the kinds of good things that this money could be directed to all over again. In other words, we could double each one of these things: 10,000 new nurses over the next two years; expanded home care beyond our original \$2-billion long-term care plan; an innovation trust for colleges, hospitals, hi-tech equipment and other research infrastructure; expansion of access to opportunities program, which is a scholarship program; strategic skills investment for community colleges, partnerships with industries and self-sustaining programs; Aiming for the Top scholarships; post-natal care for mothers and their newborns; early years challenge fund; access to children's mental health services; respite care for families caring for medically fragile or technologically dependent children; increased investments to build and modernize universities and colleges.

I dare say in my riding there's not one of these proposed projects that my constituents wouldn't wholeheartedly support. With that \$9.8 billion we could double each one of those or offer many many new programs. Sadly, the consequences of increased debt and deficits have robbed us of those opportunities.

One thing that my constituents have mentioned to me time and time again, particularly my older constituents, the seniors in my riding, is that the burden of debt disappoints them in that it will fall primarily on their children and their grandchildren's shoulders. I mentioned earlier that \$28,711 is the debt, both federal and provincial, that our children face when they are born into this province. It's a very serious issue because someone will always have to pay the price, and in this case it will be the taxpayers. The pain of not dealing with it is very serious, because it grows exponentially.

I found it very interesting to read this quote from Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal leader, who said in 1996, not long after he became the leader, "I don't think we should become obsessed with deficit reduction because it causes too much pain." The pain of not living within your means is very significant and is not something our government is willing to allow.

If this legislation is passed, it is my view that with it will come an increased respect for government. Irresponsible spending without permission has increased cynicism on the part of the voter and I do not think that this is healthy for democracy in the long term. Bill 7, the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, is a bill about accountability. It is about transparency. It is about being responsible to voters that each one of us represents. It is very important, in my view, to the long-term health of this province and I would urge each and every member of this House to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further debate?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you very much Mr Speaker for the opportunity to speak on yet another time allocation motion. So that the people at home know what this is, it's a motion which chokes off the debate in the Legislative Assembly once again. One thing this government has established a record on, in its first term and into this term now, is the number of times it has slammed the door shut on debate in the Legislature. One would think that if the legislation was popular enough or had compelling reasons to pass it, the government would be prepared to have a full and frank debate of all the stipulations contained within this particular legislation. But once again the Harris administration has shown its lack of respect for the democratic process. I suspect that many members who are not in the cabinet or not aspiring to be in the cabinet would, if they were in opposition, be publicly expressing the same concerns that I am at this time.

Members of the public may not be aware that the Legislative Assembly had sat, before we came back into session, only seven days this year, a total of seven days. You've heard the Harris administration and some of the right-wing ideologues within it talk about people having to work harder in our society, and yet the Legislative Assembly was not in session but for seven days at the stipulation of the Premier of this province, who refused to bring the House back into session early last year, who brought it back just a few days before the election was called and then refused to bring it back until late October of this year, even though the regular timetable would have called for a September return to sessions.

What does this mean? It means that there is less effective time to deal with legislation. The best legislation passed is often that legislation which is subjected to the most scrutiny, where there are amendments put forward in some instances or where the government simply recognizes that the legislation is not appropriate and withdraws it, or withdraws it for the purpose of making specific modifications to it. Instead, as usual, the Harris regime is interested in simply shoving everything through the Legislature as quickly as possible using the hammer of the majority that this government has—not a majority of the popular vote; they received 45% of that, but a majority of the seats in the Legislative Assembly. That is the way our system works. I do not quarrel with the fact that that is the case, but I do say that not having

received over 50% of the vote, I would have thought the government would have been more cautious in its approach to the Legislature and allowed more members of the House to canvass many of the issues which arise from this legislation.

We know that this government has, for instance, had to borrow for its tax cut. Let's look at why the budget has not been balanced. Here's a full term of a Tory government. I used to listen to the right-wing people say: "All you need is a Conservative government and you'll be fine. The budget will be balanced."

The problem is, they didn't listen to the more astute members of the Conservative caucus, some of whom are in cabinet today, some of whom sit in the Speaker's chair, some of whom have not aspired to—I shouldn't say "aspired to," but have not reached the cabinet table. I wonder why. I have great respect for some of those individuals who should be in the cabinet. But the new members should know that what they told Mike Harris and the whiz kids was, "Look, it makes all kinds of sense to implement our tax cuts after we balance the budget." Instead, they decided to borrow money to give a tax break which benefits, in real dollars, the richest people in this province the most.

So what we've had is four years of deficits, and at least \$21 billion has been added to the provincial debt. I can't believe this, under a government whose rhetoric was about saving money. The member for Scarborough whatever it is now—Scarborough Southwest—gets up and gives the Guy Giorno line about, "This is how much we pay per hour to service the debt"—per day, per hour, per minute. But his government is the government that has added \$21 billion.

The Dominion Bond Rating Service—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I say to the member for Etobicoke North, who tries to interject again with some astute observations, that the Dominion Bond Rating Service, certainly no bastion of Liberal or NDP thought, certainly a small-c conservative organization, was critical of the government. It said it was going to cost the government close to \$5 billion a year. In other words, the government would have to borrow that money. Wish they had listened to the present Minister of Labour; wish they had listened to Ted Arnott—I can't remember what his riding is now, Wellington something—wish they had listened to Morley Kells; wish they had listened to the new Speaker, Gary Carr, and some others who weren't so public about it, who said: "Come on, be smart about this. Be politically smart, yes, but even more so, for the sake of our economy, let's bring in our tax cuts after we've balanced the budget." I agreed with the arguments they made.

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Instead, what we have is borrowing all this money, putting the province further into debt. I'm going to tell the chamber of commerce, because the chamber of commerce used to tell me they were concerned about the debt. I'm going to tell the taxpayers' coalition and Ontarians for Responsible Government, all these organizations,

which I know are not fronts for the Conservative Party—I don't care what anybody else in this House says; they're not fronts for the Conservative Party—that this government has borrowed all this money and increased the debt of this province simply to be able to say they had a tax cut, which would have been reasonable after the budget had been balanced. That is, of course, what should be done now.

I heard people talk about solemn promises that were made. The one solemn promise I think most people in this province were made—I'm going to quote this promise verbatim. You will remember the 1995 election campaign. The now Premier of this province, Mike Harris, leader of the Conservative Party, when asked whether he was going to close hospitals, said, "Certainly, Robert"—Robert Fisher from Global TV—"I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." Now we have over 40 hospitals closed or forced to merge in this province. The Provincial Auditor, another independent voice, said this is costing hundreds of millions of dollars smore—

Mrs McLeod: Almost \$2 billion.

Mr Bradley: Almost \$2 billion, says the member for Fort William—almost \$2 billion more than was estimated. We knew that. We said that. People in our local communities said that. The only people who wouldn't say it were the Tories and the hospital closing commission they set up, which had some Tory fundraisers and others on it. They closed some hospitals, and I stood up for the member for Etobicoke Centre when they closed the hospital in his riding. I was with him on that.

Now we're hearing about \$800 million in further cuts. Instead of saying, "Let's implement our tax cuts later," we're going to have \$800 million in further cuts. The police officers cheered loudly in the gallery for certain legislation. When I sat down with a couple of them later, I said: "Do you understand what the new legislation means? Do you understand what those new cuts mean?" What they wanted to see was a lot of front-line officers on duty in the province. Instead, there are fewer front-line officers on the street today than there were under the NDP, and you used to criticize the NDP for that.

I know that you people over there know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. As a result, we're seeing drastic cuts to many essential services in government, and you're getting the calls about them. I think the more moderate members of the caucus—unfortunately they're few in number—are probably cautioning the Premier and the whiz kids about this. When they hear about people who can't get a licence quickly, for instance, who have to wait for a long, long time getting health care, cancer care—in the Niagara region, the ophthalmologists now have a cap on them. That means people are going to suffer as a result.

What are we going to do? Are we going to have a chance to debate this further? No. You're choking off the debate now, slamming the door shut on further discussion, and once again using the heavy boots—I

didn't say jackboots—of the government to put an end to this debate.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I'm very pleased to take the debate and perhaps use the Liberal member's comments as my launching pad.

He claims that we're slamming the door shut on debate, yet it was interesting. In the fall of 1995 I happened to be at a local function, a fundraiser, a charity event, and the previous member from Brampton South, one Bob Callahan, whom everybody should know, said to me, "Joe, if your government does anything"—

Interjection.

Mr Spina: Yes, Bob was a Liberal. Absolutely, yes. He said: "If your government does anything, you have to do something to quicken the pace of the legislative process, because right now it allows empty rhetoric to drag on for hours and hours. Quicken the pace." I spoke to Bob at a much later time, after we had changed the standing orders, and he said: "Good move. Maybe you didn't go far enough." Nevertheless, Bob, thanks for the suggestion. We took it to heart, probably one of the few Liberal suggestions that we've taken, but we're pleased.

Then the member from St Catharines said that he wanted to quarrel with our approach. There's a little quote that I have here from Robert Frost that says, "A Liberal is a man too broad-minded to take his own side in a quarrel." That's what I was reminded of when Mr Bradley made that comment. In addition to that, there was another expression: "As usual, the Liberals offer a mixture of sound and original ideas. Unfortunately none of the sound ideas is original and none of the original ideas is sound."

Then when we talk about the issue of taxes, which is what this legislation is about, George Bernard Shaw says, "A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul." That's fundamentally the reason why the Liberals and NDP constantly raised taxes. They wanted to buy the people's support. Isn't it amazing? This is the exact opposite. We have cut taxes and, my gosh, Peter supported the government to a majority.

My colleague from Scarborough indicated earlier that he didn't have the opportunity to talk about the tax increases that the opposition brought in from 1985 to 1995. Those tax increases were a litany of sin. There wasn't a scintilla of conscience. Besides the personal income tax increases, gasoline tax increased by a cent a litre. Retail sales tax increased by a percentage point to 8% in 1988. In 1989, gas tax increased two cents a litre. Fuel tax increased two cents a litre. The PIT went up 53% of basic federal tax. The infamous employer health tax was levied on all Ontario employers, replacing OHIP premiums. There was a tire tax imposed, for Pete's sake, in 1989. Beyond that, of course, was the real famous one that almost choked development in Toronto, the commercial concentration levy. This was unbelievable.

Interjection.

Mr Spina: Was that the Bradley tax? He was the Minister of the Environment, I think.

But the amazing part is that here you had a government that was in one of the most prosperous periods of the economy of this province, and yet the only way they could attempt to come close to balancing the budget was to raise more taxes 30-some-odd times. Unbelievable.

It was interesting that during the 1995 election campaign the Canadian Taxpayers Federation wanted candidates to sign a pledge. One hundred and twenty-nine of 130 PC candidates signed it. Only four Liberals signed it. Dalton McGuinty was not among that small group; neither was Lyn McLeod, the leader of the Liberal Party at the time.

Finance Minister Paul Martin said: "Canadians have paid to see the movie *The Deficit*. They don't want the sequel." I think those are pretty good words. Finance Minister Paul Martin, the Liberal finance minister of this country, said that we don't want the sequel. What's the taxpayer protection act all about? Exactly that. In conclusion, I'm confused. Are the Liberals supporting this bill or not?

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 46, I am required to at this time put the question on the motion before the House.

Mr Klees has moved government notice of motion number 7. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Those in favour will please say "aye."

Those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker: Members will take their seats.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Skanca, Toni
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	Young, David
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances
Bountrogianni, Marie	Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David
Bradley, James J.	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Brown, Michael A.	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being 6 o'clock, I declare this House adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1803.

Evening meeting reported in Volume B.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)
5A	125	1	25-30

Should read:

comment on it, and that was a direct comment that she made to regional councillor Susan Para and myself when we asked her if we could sit down with her and discuss what this application meant to Uxbridge township."

Why is it that she decided that it was inappropriate for her to get involved but, on the other hand, you decided,

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Première session, 37^e législature

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Wednesday 17 November 1999

Mercredi 17 novembre 1999



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 novembre 1999

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE STREETS ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways / *Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la sécurité en Ontario en interdisant la sollicitation agressive, la sollicitation de personnes dans certains lieux et le rejet de choses dangereuses dans certains lieux, et modifiant le Code de la route afin de réglementer certaines activités sur la chaussée.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I wasn't quite expecting to be up as soon as this, but nevertheless—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): You can do it.

Mr Martin: We can do it. I'll just take flight from where I left off a couple of hours ago.

It's nice to see the Minister of Community and Social Services here, and Mr Tilson, who has been around here for quite some time and knows how this place operates and can present—

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): What riding is he from?

Mr Martin: I don't know. I know you're from Kitchener, and you used to be over here so you could heckle me.

I just want to start off my short time this evening with a bit of a poem, if you don't mind. It sets the tone for the message I want to deliver or the points that I want to put on the table. It's from a little book that I carry around with me and read from time to time just to remind me of where I come from and some of the—

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Dr Seuss?

Mr Martin: Yes, Dr Seuss. No, that's the Premier. That's what he reads, Dr Seuss. I've graduated to a little bit higher academic level.

It's from a book called *Famine Diary: Journey to a New World*. It's basically stories of people who lived through the potato famine in Ireland, which is my heritage. It's interesting, some of the dynamics that happened there and how it parallels to some degree what's going on here. It actually parallels in many ways how countries have responded over time to economic difficulties and how it's usually the people on the bottom end, the poor, who take the brunt. It's the folks at the top who have power, who have the resources to get out there and grab what they can while they can and are able to read ahead of time what's coming at them who are able to position themselves to ride through some of these storms.

But here's a little bit of a poem from that book. It's by Lady Speranza, and it says:

Weary men, what reap ye?

Golden corn for the stranger.

What sow ye? Human corpses for the avenger.

Fainting forms, hunger stricken,

What see ye in the offing?

Stately ships to bear our food away,

Amid the stranger's scoffing.

There's a proud array of soldiers,

What do they round your door?

They guard our master's granaries,

From the thin hands of the poor.

Why would I start my few thoughts here this evening with this poem? Because it reflects very much the tenor and the tone of what we've seen in this province over the last four years.

We have not been, in Ontario, in a difficult economic time. Corporations have been making historically record high profits for a number of years now. If you read the reports and you believe the reports in the financial pages of the newspapers, there's a lot of money out there, but it's not going to the larger majority of working people or people who would like to work in the province. Most of that profit is being generated on the backs of people who work, who give of their time, their energy, their inspiration and their intelligence, but it accrues in larger amounts to those who are the owners of the operations, who have power, who are privileged to be in a position to be able to invest and take advantage of the good times that are upon us.

For this government, in the middle of such plenty, to decide to target, pick out and attack in such very pointed

and severe ways those who are at the bottom end so that at the end of the day the folks at the top could make even more money in my mind is morally wrong.

It reflects what happened in Ireland back in those times. There was a potato famine, but there wasn't a famine of other cash crops. The landowners, who happened to be for the most part offshore, were growing bags of grain sown by, tended to and harvested by the Irish labourer who was feeding his family on what he could produce on the little garden plot that he was given by the landowner in order to do that, by way of payment. It was that little garden that ran out of nutrient to produce the potato that the ordinary Irish citizen fed his family on, lived on, and from time to time was able to barter with other neighbours for eggs, chickens or whatever, that could not produce potatoes any more.

There was not a lack of resource. There was not a lack of wealth in the land, but that wealth was in the hands of a few people who chose to sell it offshore as opposed to taking it and turning it into bread that they could share with the literally millions of people who were starving to death in those days.

I suggest to you that it's not dissimilar to what's happening in Ontario today. The Irish peasant of that day was blamed by the powers that were around that day—

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't mean to insult the honourable member, but the Irish potato famine and all of these other things, I wonder what relevance it has to the bill before us.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order, because you're supposed to be speaking on the bill. I'm sure the member will bring his remarks within the terms of the bill, or at least I expect he will.

Mr Martin: It doesn't surprise me, because this again is a repeat of what happened just a couple of hours ago. The members across have a difficult time when they are hit between the eyes with the truth, when they know that what's coming from this side of the table is hitting home, so they get up and try to distract and try to intimidate. It's part of the strategy of those in power to keep those who are not in power but who want to contribute in some way, who want to challenge, who want to interject or present another perspective—to shut them up, keep them quiet or throw them off. I'm sorry; it ain't gonna work, it isn't going to work.

Interjections.

Mr Martin: If they'd listen for a second—because they're not good at listening; I know that up my way all kinds of people are coming to the reality more and more that this government does not listen—they might understand how all this connects.

Hon Mr Klees: We've been listening for 20 minutes, Tony.

Mr Martin: It's not always as simple as Dr Seuss, Mr Klees. It's funny that you should interject at this point and in that way, because I was going to share with you another piece of information that was—well, just let me share it with you: "Economic decisions are always moral decisions. Unfortunately, in Ontario, morality has taken a back seat to greed and political posturing." This is from

the Catholic Register, not a left-wing Catholic newspaper by any stretch of the imagination, but certainly in this instance hitting the nail on the head. That brings me back to the analogy I was using, the Irish potato famine. That which drove those who were in power in those days was no less greedy or political in nature and posturing than what we're seeing in Ontario today.

This legislation that we're debating tonight has to be, as far as I'm concerned, that which takes the cake. This is a piece of legislation that just goes completely and totally over the top, the most repulsive, odious and wrong-headed piece of legislation that I have ever laid eyes on, that I've ever seen. Thankfully, though, I'm told by those who know about these things that eventually it will be challenged in court and be found to be unconstitutional. You thank God once in a while that we do have a Constitution in this country that protects people.

If the Irish folks back in the days of the potato famine had had a constitution they could have gone to, they could have said: "Listen, there's a ton of resource here, a lot of food being grown and produced. If the powers that be, the landowners, would only share it in a different way, we could do OK here. We could all get through this difficult time and probably at the end of the day all be better off." In Ontario today, we have a government of a similar ilk that doesn't believe that the values and the principles upon which we built a community and a society that we all live in and appreciate and sometimes, unfortunately, take for granted are about community and co-operating and working together and making sure that everybody has enough, and making sure that if they don't have enough, we find a way to get them what they need.

In Ontario today I thought a good economy would be built on recognizing the contribution that each citizen could make in whatever way they found possible to do that, that we would find ways to make sure they were compensated for that so they could also participate, as we all like to do, in the life of the community: feed their families, pay their rent, get clothes for their children, particularly in the wintertime, and recreate, go to the pool, go to the library, take advantage of the education system; if they're sick, go to the hospital and be made better.

1900

But alas, that is being ripped apart, torn to shreds, diminished in many serious and significant ways, and no more so than for the poorest in our communities, for those who find themselves in a situation, perhaps in between jobs, perhaps because of some health issue, perhaps because of some relationship that completely fell apart and the person didn't have the strength to rise up and move on in spite of that—all the myriad ways that we get challenged as human beings, that defeat some people, empower other people, but in many ways are a very real part of the world that we live in. So we choose as a community of people, in most instances, certainly up until 1995 in Ontario, to try to find constructive, positive, creative ways to be of assistance to people.

But no, this government has consistently, since it was elected, picked on a few people to blame for everything

that has happened, to demonize so that politically they could take advantage of some of the anger and resentment and fear that they generate out there by targeting these people, and ultimately to take advantage of that so that they themselves can wrest power out of the hands of others who would want to be government.

What did they do that's so wrong, you may ask? Well, the first thing they did was to cut the income of the poorest and most marginalized of our citizens. I don't think they were even in power a month. I remember it, and I've said it so often in this House that those of you who have been around for four years will probably be getting a little sick and tired of hearing it. In July 1995, I woke up one morning to find out that this government's very first act of public policy was to cut 22.6% out of the income of the poorest of our citizens, and they thought nothing of it. No big deal, they were getting too much anyway; a lot of those people were living in the lap of luxury, they thought, and taking advantage of the system. In fact, the reality was that all of them were struggling to make ends meet, struggling to keep their head above water, struggling to put food on the table for their children, struggling to pay the rent, to find a home that was affordable, struggling to participate in community in a way that didn't degrade them or take away from their dignity as people. The first thing this government did was to reduce their income.

The second thing they did, and it wasn't that long after, was that they began to cut the programs that supported them in their efforts to keep body and soul together; supported them in their efforts to take them from here to here; supported them in their efforts to get education for themselves and for their children; supported them as they struggled to deal with some of the social challenges they faced because they were poor and lived in parts of communities that by their very nature presented challenges of perhaps violence and crime where their children were concerned, or whatever. It happens in every neighbourhood, but it too often seems to involve those who are poor and of meagre circumstance. So they cut the programs.

They cut their income, they cut the programs, and then they began to systematically demonize them, compare them to criminals, wrap them up in a package that was the poor and criminals and unions, and continually label them as both losers and people who are causing us all the problems that we're facing: The rich can't get richer in this province because the poor are getting too much money; the poor are getting too many programs to support them and to help them out.

There was no recognition given to the fact that every penny we give to somebody on social assistance goes immediately into the economy of the community in which they live. In Sault Ste Marie, when you took the 22.6% away from the welfare recipients, you took, on average, \$2 million a month out of the coffers of the small businesses that these people bought their groceries in, for example. That's \$24 million a year out of the economy of Sault Ste Marie. I sometimes wonder if you guys think that the poor, when you give them a few

bucks to keep body and soul together, bury it in a hole in the backyard. Is that what you think, that they bury it in a hole in the backyard? Or perhaps they put it into some Swiss bank account. They wish they could. Or maybe they take the old Buick that they're driving around, held together with baling wire, and trade it in on a Cadillac, like Mr Klees drives around in. But they don't do that. They spend every penny they get on groceries, on clothing for their kids, on housing. It goes into the economy of the community they live in. But you don't seem to understand that.

So you've taken their income away. You've taken their programs away. And now, the Minister of Community and Social Services very proudly rose in his place this afternoon and said, "We're against anybody on welfare having a cottage." Good for you. Isn't that wonderful? Drive the poor deeper into poverty. Just because you are in between jobs and need a handout from government, from a pool of money that you paid into in the first place when you were working, you should have to cash in everything you own. You should be absolutely destitute before this government will give you one red cent. That's morally wrong. Not only is it morally wrong, but it's going to create problems for you in other areas in the long run too. I was at a talk by the chief of police of Sault Ste Marie last week. It was interesting. He said one of the most important factors in violence in communities, whether it increases or decreases, is the level of poverty. So you drive people further into poverty, which is what you're doing with this newly found hot button that the Minister of Community and Social Services has found, and you increase the cases of violence in your community.

You've passed legislation that says that if a welfare person gets a food basket from their mother and doesn't report it on the forms they put in at the end of the month, they get cut off for life. Yet we have people in this province who evade paying taxes, and they get rewarded by becoming cabinet ministers in this government. Explain that to me; explain how that works.

Now, with this legislation, the only avenue people have left to raise a few bucks for themselves—you're going to take that away from them too. You're going to stop people from panhandling. You've taken welfare away; you've taken their programs away; they can't get anything from their families. They go out on the street and panhandle, they're down on their knees begging for a few shekels so they can buy some bread, and if they do it too aggressively or they have the smell of alcohol on their breath, they're thrown in jail. Or God forbid they go out and wash a few windshields with a squeegee: They become criminals. People who already have a housing problem, a social problem, a problem of poverty, you are now going to give them a criminal problem, a justice problem. Shame on you. It's morally wrong.

1910

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'd like to comment on the member for Sault Ste Marie's remarks. I always respect him when he rises in this place

and speaks. I disagree with almost every word he says, but I respect him, because I honestly believe that he believes what he's saying, and he tries to put that view forward.

It's interesting that he talks about the Irish potato famine. Many of my ancestors were part of that as well. We may even have come over on the same boat, for all I know, although I expect that my ancestors were Protestant and his ancestors were Catholic, and our ancestors probably fought in the same way that we're fighting today.

Notwithstanding that, I appreciate his talking about the terrible poverty that existed back then. I know the opposition tries to relate this bill to poverty, to lack of education, to a lack of jobs. I understand that. That's not what this bill is about. We're concerned about the poor. We're concerned about getting jobs for people. We're concerned about educating people and giving them a higher standard of living.

There was a survey done quite recently—the member may know of it—where these young people who have been washing windows were interviewed, and I think 80% of them don't want that life. They want to get good jobs; they want to improve their way of life. I'm sure the member for Sault Ste Marie will agree with that. We do too. This bill is to enable people to walk down the street safely without being harassed, to be able to drive along the streets safely without being harassed. It has nothing to do with the issues the member for Sault Ste Marie is talking about.

We on this side are concerned about those issues. We're doing things about those issues. I know the member for Sault Ste Marie does not agree with some of the things we're doing in dealing with the poor. We're trying to educate people, we're trying to get them jobs, workfare, those sorts of things. But the member is wrong as to what the thrust of this legislation is.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): The more I listen to the member for Sault Ste Marie—I always admire the way he puts things. It is crisp, clear, precise and very concise too.

My concern is that no matter how well he put it, the Conservatives there just close their eyes to this and they don't understand that. I would try to warn the member for Sault Ste Marie, don't try to convince them, because they are just blind and go the direction they want to go. It is clear that this Conservative Mike Harris bully government wants the poor to just go away. "Since they won't go away, maybe we'll put them somewhere like in jail. Maybe we should have them charged." Right now there are people who want justice in the court, but the backlog is so high. But no: "Let's line up the poor and charge them, so maybe we can get more jobs for lawyers or more jobs for judges to do. Maybe they have nothing to do."

The attack on the poor is just so brutal. They brag about this great economy we have, yet we find that we have more homeless people than ever, Mr Speaker. I know you are concerned about this. I think for many of

those Conservatives over there, their mothers and fathers must be saying: "Let me turn the TV off. I'm not quite sure that this is my son or my daughter, who is speaking about the most desperate in our society, that all they would like to do is put them in jail."

"You know what? If we have visitors coming to our city seeing these people begging, it's bad for us, but where can we put them? I think the best place to put them is in jail, and maybe it helps that part of the economy." You should be ashamed of yourselves, the way you treat the most vulnerable in our society. I think you should go back and talk to Mom and Dad and say, "Give me back those values that you taught me earlier on, to be more compassionate."

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to commend the member for Sault Ste Marie for his remarks tonight and focus on the point he was making, which is that the government has made it their business in the last four years to press a lot of hot buttons and bring forward legislation that demonizes the poor and makes them the result of any ills that we might have in the province. The government has done that consistently since the day they were elected. They punish social assistance recipients, get rid of employment equity and say that we don't have jobs because someone else's child, who is black or who may be disabled or native, is getting your child's job. And let's make sure that people who are on a lower income level but not quite on social assistance can't even get a drug card any more. So we make it even harder for them to try to keep themselves at work when they have no benefits, especially drug benefits. Or make sure they don't have a car that's worth more than \$5,000, and God forbid, if they live in northern Ontario and they're trying to drive to work because there isn't much public transit, that that car break down in winter.

The point he was making is that this bill is yet another attempt by this government to go after the people who are at the bottom of the scale. The point of the bill is to get off the street the human debris, the people who don't have a home, the people who are suffering from mental illness and don't have a place in an institution. We'll get the police to pick them up and throw them in jail, and then no one else will have to see what's happening in the province, which is that the gap between the rich and the poor is growing. It's growing by leaps and bounds, and this government's tax cut feeds into that.

There's nothing in the bill that talks about youth, squeegee kids wanting to have jobs and how the government's going to do that, because the government has no plan on providing employment for youth. So let's get serious. There's nothing here with respect to how we deal with the homelessness, which is why a lot of these people are on the streets in the first place, and the government made sure that in the throne speech they didn't do anything about that. This bill is all about how to get the human garbage, the human debris, off the streets, get them in jail so no one else has to see the poverty in our province.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'd like to add a few comments to the speech by the member from Sault Ste Marie. He knows, and I think everyone in this House knows, that I have a very great deep regard for him. I know he is very hard-working and he's very idealistic, but there are some times when idealistic people's thinking is shadowed by the idealism and Utopianism and you forget what is real in life.

He described the bill as punitive and odious. I would like to remind the member that we're talking about the disposal of dangerous objects in parks and playgrounds. We're talking about discarded needles. We're talking about discarded condoms. These are not sewing needles we're talking about; these are needles which bring disease—AIDS. We know about AIDS, do we not? I do not want the children of Kitchener, the children of Toronto, the children of Sault Ste Marie or the children of any other community in this province to pick up a discarded needle or condom and be subjected to AIDS.

I had to laugh a little bit to myself when the member from Scarborough-Rouge River stood up and commented. He's rather idealistic too. He is a very good member. He is running for the presidency of his party right now. I know he is opposed by his party leader, Dalton McGuinty, who would rather have somebody else. I don't know if Mr McGuinty shares his views, but I would like to say that I think you would make a very good president of your party.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie has two minutes to respond.

Mr Martin: I want to thank the members from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, Scarborough-Rouge River, Nickel Belt, and Kitchener Centre for their comments. It's good that we have this debate and that we hear from everybody their view on these matters, because they're very important matters.

I just might, in my minute and a half, say to the members that the analogy I used with the Irish potato famine and what's happening in Ontario now is very clear. You have a group of people in desperate poverty in a land of plenty. In Ontario, you have a group of people at the bottom end, and that group is growing because the gap between the rich and the poor is growing, going into desperate poverty, being pushed into desperate poverty. We have homelessness on the streets of our larger cities now in numbers that we've never seen before. We hear in conversations that we have with the United Way, for example, about TB. I brought this up with the Minister of Health a couple of years ago and he denied categorically that there was TB happening out there.

You take all of these problems that are going to escalate and become bigger problems and you try to sweep them under the rug, you blame somebody else for them, mostly the victims themselves. You become punitive in the way that you deal with those folks, and you think it's going to go away. Well, it's not. It's going to come back to haunt us. In a civilized society, in a society as educated and intelligent as the one we live in, I would hope there would be a more sophisticated response from government, giving leadership on these issues.

You talk about the needles, syringes and the condoms etc. This isn't going to do it. You're focusing, I would suggest, on the wrong end. What about the swarming? A kid, 15 years old, gets killed here. Where are the police to deal with that? You won't hire those police—

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The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Further debate?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It is an honour to rise this evening to take part in the debate on Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act.

As the member for Simcoe North, I am the first to admit that we really don't have a problem with aggressive panhandling or solicitation in beautiful central Ontario. However, the residents of my riding expect it to stay that way. I campaigned on Blueprint. I campaigned on having a safer Ontario, an Ontario safe for everyone to live, work and raise a family. I include my family, who expect and deserve a safer Ontario to live in.

As a new grandparent, the issue of community safety is very important to me. I want my granddaughter—and I'm very, very proud of her; her name is Rachel—to be able to grow up without fear from harm by simply walking down a city street. That is why I am proud to stand here in this House this evening to voice my support for Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act.

As most of you know, my riding is the home of the OPP headquarters in Orillia, so the issue of community safety is at the hearts of many people in the riding of Simcoe North. I often have the opportunity to discuss policing with the employees of the OPP. Our government's leadership in acknowledging the importance of public safety in our communities is unprecedented in the history of government police services activity. The very fact that our Solicitor General stood in this House to honour those officers who have sacrificed their lives in the line of duty for the citizens of this province by announcing a permanent memorial to be constructed here at Queen's Park should tell everyone our commitment to policing and safety in Ontario.

So far as a government, we have responded to the requests of police officers to make Ontario safer by setting tough new standards for parole boards so that fewer criminals are granted early release and by launching the first strict discipline facilities or boot camp for young offenders to emphasize education and responsibility, not entertainment and recreation—which I am proud to say is in my riding of Simcoe North. Operation Turnabout is a resounding success, and I can only hope that the Minister of Correctional Services can expand this program to other areas of the province.

We implemented a Victims' Bill of Rights and an office of victims to ensure that victims and witnesses of crime get the support they need and deserve. We made changes to ensure that our courts are able to deal quickly with the cases before them. Ontario's first registry of sex offenders, to strengthen our protection against these crimes, was also created by our government.

Our government has committed to putting another 1,000 new police officers on our streets by next year. We've said this many times, and over 500 have already been added. We are working with the police to implement a rural crime prevention strategy, and that is part of our \$150-million community safety commitment, which will help keep the citizens of Ontario and of Simcoe North free from the tentacles of crime.

Public safety was an issue when my daughter decided to go off to university. I can remember making a choice between a school in Toronto and the University of Western Ontario in London. The qualities of the universities in Toronto were top-notch; however, I was more afraid for my daughter's safety going to school. I had fears as to what kind of people she would meet while walking home from class at 10 or 11 o'clock in the evening. I know this is a fear many parents have when their son or daughter decides to go away from home to university. In fact, it was the main reason why we did favour Western over a school in Toronto.

During the election, our party promised the voters of Ontario that if we were given the honour of continuing to form a government, we would continue to address the issues of community safety. We also promised in Blueprint that we would give police the power to crack down on aggressive panhandling and squeegee people so that our streets would be safer for everyone. Many municipal officials have been expressing their concerns on squeegee people. Police Chief Terry McLaren was quoted in the Peterborough Examiner on September 4, 1999, "The squeegee kids are a nuisance and a safety hazard." In fact, the Liberal member for St. Paul's said in the Toronto Star as recently as October 2, "Within a civil society, you should be able to walk the streets and not be harassed." I agree with the member's statement, and that is again another reason why I'm supporting the Safe Streets Act.

Our government believes that all Ontarians have the right to drive on the roads, walk down the streets or use public places without being or feeling intimidated. During the last provincial election, I campaigned on giving the police the tools to crack down on squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling. This legislation will fulfill my promise to the people of Simcoe North and our government's promise to the people of Ontario.

As a government, we are responding to requests that something be done about behaviour that jeopardizes the safe use of Ontario's streets. I believe that the proposed tools in this bill are the right ones for the police to get rid of aggressive panhandling on our streets of Ontario. Under this legislation, police will be able to arrest people who are committing the provincial offences of aggressive solicitation, such as threatening the person solicited with physical harm, blocking the path of the person being solicited or soliciting while intoxicated by alcohol or drugs. These are clearly unacceptable gestures in our society. It would be an offence to solicit persons in situations where they cannot easily leave places, such as bus stops, taxi stands, bank machines, parking lots or while getting in or out of a motorized vehicle.

The Highway Traffic Act would be amended to make it an offence to enter a roadway to stop, attempt to stop or approach a motor vehicle to offer, sell or provide any product or service to the driver or anyone else in the vehicle. Of course, emergency and towing vehicles would be exempted from this act, and police discretion will be used for local charitable fundraising.

I am not alone in agreeing with the tools outlined in this bill. Toronto Police Inspector Randal Munroe sees what the Attorney General is doing with this legislation. The police inspector said, "What the minister has attempted to do, and I think he's addressed the issue, is to give us something that will deal with the repetitive harassing type of behaviour that most of us find problematic in our public spaces."

Some people have said that legislation banning squeegee people will not work. However, in the province of Manitoba the city of Winnipeg passed a bylaw which bans squeegee people from working in that city. I'd like to read to the House the first few lines of a Winnipeg Sun article: "Charging squeegee kids and sending them to court has solved the city's problem," says a foot officer. 'Since May (when the bylaw took place), about seven kids have been charged under the bylaw banning people from washing car windows on roadways,' said Constable Bruce Day."

Further, here are some comments from another Winnipeg Sun article on the issue: "Police have had great success keeping the kids off the roadways since the bylaw was put in place in May," Deputy Police Chief Terry McGregor said." And the deputy police chief of Winnipeg went on to be quoted as saying, "People should be able to use the streets uninterrupted and it was a public safety issue."

This sounds like what the Bill 8 legislation is trying to do for Ontario. I commend the Attorney General for bringing forth this legislation in an expedient manner.

As I said earlier, I have to admit that the squeegee problem or aggressive panhandling is certainly not a problem in Simcoe North as it is in larger cities, such as Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton, but it is growing to smaller cities like Kingston, Niagara Falls and Kitchener where intersections have become infested with squeegee people. Without Bill 8, I wonder how long it would be before this phenomenon would spread to small towns and cities like Orillia, Midland, Penetanguishene and even to towns in northern Ontario.

I was talking to my chief government whip the other day, my colleague the member for Oak Ridges, and he was telling me about pulling into a gas station north of Toronto and when he went to clear off his windshield at the self-serve, by the way, the squeegee was not there. We wondered at which intersection in the city the squeegee is at right now.

During this debate, our government has been accused by some of not addressing the root causes. I think we should take a look at that. To me, the best social policy in the world is a real job. No welfare cheque or panhandling can replace the feeling of coming home after a hard day and getting a well-earned paycheck. I certainly know

this from my 25 years' experience in the workforce before I entered provincial politics.

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My parents built a successful construction business, raised six children and never asked for or received any government assistance in their lives. They believed, and they still believe, that hard work and common sense will reward you with the lifestyle that you expect. I too strongly believe in this idea.

Perhaps some of our panhandling people could get employment at a car wash and use it as a stepping stone to a better job with self-esteem and with dignity.

Since 1995, our government has been putting in place the right economic conditions to create more jobs for Ontarians. We have scrapped the land transfer tax for first-time buyers of new homes, which helps to create more jobs in the construction industry. Our construction industry is doing very well at this time. We're at an all-time high, of course.

We have eliminated the job-killing EHT payroll tax on the first \$400,000 of payroll, a direct boost to hiring and expansion. Again, more jobs.

We have scrapped unfair hiring quotas and unbalanced labour legislation, again creating more jobs.

We have ended the \$50 corporate filing fee.

We have removed 140,000 low-income people from Ontario tax rolls.

And yes, we have created a nearly 20% cut in the average worker's compensation payroll taxes, which reduced the cost of keeping and expanding the number of employees in Ontario corporations.

Most importantly, we cut average personal income taxes by over 30%, which now gives the average consumers more money in their pockets so they can go out and buy more goods and services, which again translates into more jobs.

All of these items have helped to create a stronger Ontario with more job creation. Since the throne speech in September 1995, employment in Ontario has increased by 615,000 net new jobs, which is the largest increase in our country's history. We are driving the Canadian economy, and every day we are putting more people off the welfare rolls and into good jobs.

When I drive around my riding, I can't help but notice those wonderful signs in the windows that read "Help Wanted." So the notion that there are no jobs out there for these people is wrong. But I understand that for some of these people it is difficult to find these jobs, and that is why we have allocated \$265 million to employment programs for young people and adults. We fund summer job programs. We fund apprenticeship training. We fund courses on basic literacy, resumé writing and job preparation. We do this to help people who are unemployed get the skills for jobs with a real future. Does any reasonable person believe that panhandling gives a person a chance for a better future?

As most of you in this House know, my riding of Simcoe North has a strong tourism industry. We are home to beautiful resorts, golf courses—16 golf courses,

by the way—some beautiful ski resorts, and of course we have Casino Rama as well as many beautiful restaurants among our lakefront businesses. We are part of Ontario's natural playground on the shores of Georgian Bay, Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching. Our tourism community employs thousands of people, thousands of young people. Being from that kind of community, I understand that the tourism industry is important for our economy locally but also provincially.

When people come from outside of this province to visit places like Toronto and Ottawa, they want to be able to walk the streets of our cities and towns without the intimidation of aggressive panhandling. They want to drive on our roads without facing squeegee people. These squeegee people and panhandlers not only threaten our public safety but also threaten our tourism industry, and that means hundreds of thousands of jobs for the citizens of our province.

This legislation goes further than what we promised in our election campaign document, Blueprint. It also includes a ban on the disposal of syringes, broken glass and other dangerous objects in our parks or other outdoor places normally used by the public. The disposal of these dangerous objects in parks and in playgrounds I think is despicable. I believe we have to have legislation in place to make people responsible for their actions, especially for the sake of younger people from the cores of some of the major cities, where they don't have acres and acres of land to play on, where they don't have places to go to have family picnics and where they don't have the financial resources to get away on family vacations.

How would anyone in this Legislature feel if their young son or daughter was playing in a sandbox at one of the many parks and recreational areas throughout this province and they cut their hand on some broken glass or, even worse, on a used syringe? I feel this bill will do a lot more to curb the dangerous practice.

In turn, I'm very proud to stand here today to lend my support to this legislation. Once again, it will fulfill another election promise that we made to the people of this province on June 3.

I thank you for the opportunity of addressing this House tonight.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I listened with great interest, and I respect the last few minutes from the member opposite, my fellow rookie, as we're called. All of us here who have children or grandchildren care about their safety; there's no doubt.

I believe, though, that the member opposite may be overly worried about his daughter's safety in Toronto. Squeegee kids are not the big fear to our children. In fact, I was at Ryerson last Monday with my colleague from Don Valley East. The students held an event highlighting the housing crisis for students. I learned there that some of the squeegee kids on downtown corners are actually Ryerson University students. They are there because of the high tuition fees, the crisis with housing, the fact that student loans are inadequate. I don't feel the member

opposite had to fear for his daughter's safety with respect to these particular students. I certainly would not fear them.

A very recent study, in fact released this week, showed that squeegee kids are significantly less likely to be on drugs than other homeless people.

Interjection.

Mrs Bountrogianni: The University of Guelph. I can give you the author later.

Let's look at preventing the need for squeegee kids. Let's look at programs that look at the importance of proper early childhood education, that look at counselling kids when they're young, before it becomes too late, that look at truly effective employment programs—not Ontario Works, where only 5% of the people on welfare are on Ontario Works. I do believe that if we look at the roots of the problem, the squeegee kids will not be an issue because there won't be any need to squeegee.

Mr Martin: I think this speaker pretty much summed it up when he talked about the tourism industry and how we need to make our streets clear and clean and attractive, and get rid of, as my colleague from Nickel Belt said, the human debris.

For all intents and purposes, this is a nuisance law. Anything that is identified or considered a nuisance by this government will fall under the umbrella of this law, and they'll all go to jail. They will think, in their wisdom, that they've solved the problem, when in fact they haven't. This government is notorious for picking victims, for picking winners and losers. For example, they set up a welfare snitch line; they set up a WCB snitch line. But in the auditor's report of yesterday, we found out that for 1996 there was \$2 billion worth of PST outstanding. This is tax owed by business people in this community, their friends and benefactors for the most part, although I think you'll find that as they begin to realize what's going on, a lot of those small business people will wake up and smell the coffee and understand where we're coming from on a lot of this. But there's no snitch line out there for tax evasion, is there? Isn't that interesting? So you will pick who will be the nuisance.

Why don't we expand this? I sometimes think that what we should be doing here is introducing amendments, putting on the table all those things that annoy us. I drove into a parking lot on the weekend to pick up some groceries. The person before me in that spot brought their cart out, unloaded their groceries and left the cart right there. I mean, gee, call the cops. Put them in jail. That was a nuisance. I know some people who don't like to be awakened on Saturday morning by the Boy Scout selling apples. Are we going to arrest him too? Is that part of the plan? I don't know. I wonder.

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Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I want to congratulate the member from Simcoe on his comments. He brings an interesting perspective. The members opposite want you to believe this is a bill strictly about squeegeeing. In my comments I'm going to get to why that is intimidating and harassment and should be dealt with.

The member highlights that it is a bigger bill than that, a more expansive bill than that.

One of the things he talked about is something that means quite a bit to me. He talked about his kids being able to play in their park. Right now, if little Zach and Jesse and Lauren in St Catharines want to go to their local park and there are needles discarded recklessly throughout the park and broken glass everywhere, this takes away from those kids' ability to enjoy what they should be able to enjoy. As the member from Simcoe points out, little Zach and Jesse and Lauren deserve a cleaner park.

There should be fines for people who go to our public parks, and without any regard for anybody else, just throw away these dangerous items. As Mr Wettlaufer pointed out, hypodermic needles are extremely dangerous. We live in an era where we're all very concerned about the AIDS virus. How would we feel if a little kid picked one of those up and was hurt by that needle and something terrible then happened to that person?

This is a way with fines—not everyone goes to jail; there's a \$500 fine. A police officer sees someone breaking glass in a park, in a sandbox and burying it—some kid could get hurt—or throwing away a needle in a park recklessly. Now the police can do something about that person and we can stop that so our kids—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): The member for Simcoe North had a very illuminating speech.

To the member for Niagara Falls, you should be aware that there currently are fines. It is a matter of enforcement of existing laws, which has been hampered because, you see, since 1995 we've had a reduction in the number of police. Isn't that amazing? We have fewer people to enforce these laws than we did in 1995.

The question really is, what is the priority of this government? Is it some sleight of hand? It's kind of like the Wizard of Oz. You have this big face on the screen of the wizard, but it's a small man in the back manipulating a picture, trying to deceive you, trying to deceive people about what the true intent is and the true nature. It is simply a shell game, simply for show.

I say to the member for Scarborough North, in your comments you really should have said: "Are there no jails? Are there no poorhouses?" You sound like a modern-day Ebenezer Scrooge, you seriously do. That's very sad. It is very sad today to see the patterns of history repeat themselves.

Instead of having that sense of joy, that sense of brotherhood, that spirit of generosity, that sense of compassion, we have a punitive measure. Frankly, we have a measure which isn't going to work. Instead of directing these energies into constructive activities, we're going to begin to incarcerate, we're going to begin to criminalize.

I say to the member, because I know he cares about the nature of this province, 200 people are going to scare away 100,000 jobs? Please. I seriously will vote against the bill. That is a bit of rhetoric which really has no place in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe North has two minutes to respond.

Mr Dunlop: I thank all the members for their comments on my moment of debate.

In late April of this year, we, the Mike Harris government, brought forth Blueprint. Part of this Blueprint called for a safer Ontario. We promised the people of Ontario a safer Ontario. Everyone in Ontario has the right to be safe from crime. We should be able to walk in our neighbourhoods, use public transit, live in our homes and send our children to school free from the fear of criminals.

Too many Ontario families don't have that peace of mind. Some politicians will try to convince you that crime is not a major problem. What's 200 squeegee kids? They will blame anyone but the criminals. Just try telling that to victims of crime and their families.

We made it very clear where we stand. We are putting more police on the streets and increasing support for victims of crime while cracking down on criminals. We repeated our campaign promise on October 21 in the throne speech. It's time, ladies and gentlemen, to keep another promise.

I come from a constituency where we have little, if any, vagrancy, begging or aggressive panhandling. As I said earlier, when my daughter completed secondary school in 1993, we, as parents, would not allow her to attend university here in Toronto because, as parents, we saw Toronto growing as an unsafe community. This was unfair to her. How many other parents and tourists from outside of Toronto or Ontario feel the same way about these streets?

The citizens of Ontario expect this legislation and I support the implementation of Bill 8.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Tonight I'm going to do something a little different. I'm going to talk directly about the bill. I want the members from the other side to follow with me and make sure I stay on task with this bill. Then I'm going to show you some other things that are happening outside the bill to see whether or not they apply. So pay attention. Here we go. Are you ready? This is it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member for Brant has the floor. I want to be able to hear him. If you feel it necessary to interject or anything, step outside and then it won't bother the proceedings of the House.

Mr Levac: I think I've got your attention.

Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways.

Page 1: Are you ready? Let's define "solicit." It says, "... means to request, in person, the immediate provision of money or another thing of value, regardless of whether consideration is offered or provided in return, using the

spoken, written or printed word, a gesture or other means."

Comment: There's a problem here, and the problem is this. It's been pointed out that it's at the discretion of the police to decide whether or not charities performing the same solicitation can be charged under the law. In discussions with the police—in the last couple of days they've been here and I've asked them—their comment to me was: "You know what? It's very rare that we'd ever implement that interpretation." So I asked the deeper question. "Would you or could you?" "Well, we probably wouldn't, but it can be done."

So I challenge the government to ensure that they put in an amendment that says the charities are exempt from that type of activity.

"Aggressive manner" means a manner that is likely to cause a reasonable person to be concerned for his or her safety or security." I have a problem with the fact of interpreting. We have to get to the police and say, "I thought they were going to hurt me and therefore I get the charge." Do I resent the fact that somebody may accost me in a way that I fear for myself? Absolutely. I don't admire or respect anyone who would do anything in an action that would cause us any harm or pain psychologically or physically.

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There are a couple of items in the bill that I want to refer to that may cause some problems. There's been mention of the disposing of used condoms and a new or used hypodermic needle or syringe and broken glass. Indeed, these problems have existed and are absolutely unacceptable in our society and in our streets today.

I want to ask a question, though. Do you ask the police officers, who have been reduced in the province: "How are you going to find these things? If you find these things, how are you going to identify who did it?" Broken glass in a park—when does that take place? How do we turn that into a crime? We pass a law that's pretty well unenforceable.

The member from St Paul made it very clear in an earlier statement about the bill. He said, "It's like the rooster taking credit for the sun rising." The reverse is true. The sun rises and we need the people to show us the way. The way we show that is by putting more police officers on the street.

I want you to ask this question of the other side. Explain to me the 1,000 new police officers. I asked the police officers themselves, and I'm sure you heard it in private but you don't want to publicly announce it. The 1,000 is not translated into 1,000. I tried to optimistically say that's going to be 600 people. They said, "You're way off, pal; it's more like 250 to 300 officers." I want 1,000 police officers audited. Will the government audit that to ensure that it's 1,000 new officers?

Let's talk about safety, safe streets. You're asking about safe streets. Let's find out if the safe streets are going to be accomplished with fewer officers on the street than there were before the NDP. They're not there.

"Every person who contravenes section 2, 3 and 4 is guilty of an offence and is liable,

"(a) on a first conviction, to a fine of not more than \$500."

We already found out that people are doing this, squeegeeing and panhandling, because they don't have any money, so we're going to take blood from a stone.

"(b) on each subsequent conviction, to a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisonment for a term of not more than six months, or to both."

Again, to try to show the public that we're going to take care of those 200 kids on the street, we're going to put them in jail. If we can't put them in jail, we'll put them on probation, a very stressed area at minimum.

"A police officer who believes on reasonable and probable grounds that that a person has contravened subsection 177(2) may arrest the person without warrant if,

"(a) before the alleged contravention of subsections 177(2), the police officer directed the person not to engage in the activity that contravenes the subsection."

So now we have to have the police officer catching the person in the act of the crime and telling them, "Don't do that." More use for an officer to be doing that to say: "Please don't break that glass and put it down in that sandbox. Please don't use that syringe because if you discard it, it's against the law. Please don't use that condom and throw it away because it might contravene the law." We've got police officers now making sure that doesn't happen, because—we've got fewer officers on the street to do that than we had before.

We also are going to say that the 1,000 translates into new officers when you know as well as I do that there are going to be fewer officers on the street to be able to perform that duty.

Mr Wettlaufer: More means more and fewer means fewer.

Mr Levac: Will you do the audit? Will the government do the audit? I think it's important to find out if the government will do the audit to ensure that it's 1,000 new officers. Translate that into 1,000 new officers. The police associations in this province will look to you and say, "The 1,000 officers, are they new?"

Interjections.

Mr Levac: Yes, I can imagine that they did, because they said to me that the 1,000 actually translates into around 250. So let's make it 1,500 to get it to the 1,000. We want a 1,000? Translate it properly.

The government's priorities seem to be a little bit backwards. We've got 200 squeegee kids having laws made up in order to get them off the street. It has already been pointed out several times, and even before the auditor's report, that the Family Responsibility Office is a mess and we've got 200,000 children who are not getting the monies that are needed for them from deadbeat dads.

Interjection.

Mr Levac: The member wants to explain now. Let me hear some more rhetoric about how you're going to do a good job, you have plans, you're going to make things

happen. But 200,000 children are not getting what's needed for them to survive in our society, and you're saying that's OK. The Family Responsibility Office is in a mess, and we've got people now passing a bill right away. Right now we've got to get this bill passed in order to get those 200 kids off the street, but we can't correct 200,000 children not getting the money that's necessary for their survival. We have not improved that collection at all. They're currently in arrears for a total of \$1.2 billion. Being in arrears for \$1.2 billion is a disgrace for any of the moms and children involved in this program.

Now, that's universal; let's talk about individuals. I've had to take calls in my office for people who are in arrears for \$25,000, on an individual case. When I make the phone call, first of all, I take about two hours to get through to try to find out what's going on with this \$25,000. You know what happens? I've got the "deadbeat dads" who are giving the money, and it's getting lost in the system, and the moms and dads are still not getting the money. That's 200,000 children not getting the money that's necessary for their survival, and we've got to pass a bill to make it illegal to put glass on the ground. It's already against bylaws in cities. You can charge people with littering to do that.

Ontario mothers and children are getting busy signals from the government, literally. The auditor tried testing the FRO, and half of his calls didn't even get through for busy signals.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): You promised you would talk about the bill.

Interjections.

Mr Levac: Oh, I explained to you very clearly that I was going to explain the bill, and I did. Then I said that the things around the bill are what's going to make you understand that this government's priorities are a little bit wrong.

The member over there wants to heckle and get me off course and simply say, "Talk about the bill." The bill is there. I told you what's going wrong with the bill. You don't want to hear the fact that 200,000 children are going without any money. Would you like to explain to your constituents in your office? I would love to hear the member's response to the telephone calls that he must be getting in his office about the deadbeat dads not paying their money for those kids. I'm sure that you go out and explain to them: "I've got better priorities. I'm sorry. The money that you should get, the \$17,000 or \$18,000 that you are in arrears—you can't afford your rent, you can't pay for food—is less important than getting those squeegee kids off the street." That's really silly.

That's a priority you should be taking now. You put a bill on the floor today, and I'll rise and say, "Yes, Mr Speaker, I vote for getting 200,000 children their money." I'd vote for it now. Put it on the floor and it's yours. I'll buy that argument, and I won't even give you an argument. I'll sit back and say to you, sir, that I would love to support a bill that gives 200,000 children money and information that they need to survive.

So those 200 squeegee kids that you seem to be saying speak about the bill, if you come back to us after that and show me you're taking care of them, I'll even buy your bill.

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To continue this and to keep upsetting the members on the other side with the truth, let's turn to the homeless; let's relate the homeless; let's say to the members on the other side that if they don't think there is a relationship between being homeless and being a squeegee kid, then we have another problem. First, we've got 200,000 kids who aren't getting their money, but that's not related to the bill. We've got homeless people in this province, but that's not related to the squeegee kids and panhandlers at all.

We had a problem with this government from their first mandate, which basically said, "We've got to end rent controls; we've got to cancel 17,000 new affordable housing units immediately; we're going to eliminate all provincial support to new social housing; we're going to cut welfare to the poorest and the neediest; we're going to close psychiatric hospitals, and we're going to reduce those services."

In my riding, the wonderful restructuring plan had us transferring all psychiatric patients to Hamilton. Now if we have parents, relatives or friends of any of those people in need, they're getting transferred to Hamilton and now we've got to send them out of town.

But of course there's no relationship between squeegee kids and being homeless, because none of these problems the government has caused have anything to do with the squeegee kids. We've got indications that there are squeegee kids who are homeless; we've got indications that squeegee kids can't afford to live in some places because there's no affordable housing; we've got evidence that squeegee kids, in some cases, have mental health needs that need to be addressed.

Let's talk about some other priorities, and then I'll wrap up and talk about the bill in a final way.

Interjections.

Mr Levac: I know I have their attention. It seems that everyone likes to talk about it. But I'll say something to wake somebody up somewhere.

Let's talk about policing. We have fewer—

Interjection.

Mr Levac: Statistics Canada, of course, and if it doesn't fit, you won't use it.

The number of police officers has declined by 1,522 officers between 1993 and 1997. The ratio of police officers to population rose from 1 to 453 in 1993 to 1 to 535 in 1997. So in 1997 we've got fewer police officers and a higher ratio of police officers to citizens. The 1998 budget announced \$150 million over five years to pay for 1,000 new officers. Again I repeat, because it's worth repeating, that Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday we had several meetings with officers, front-line officers, executives to the front-line officers, telling us the 1,000 officers will not be new.

I will also suggest to you very strongly that I suggested to them that it probably translates to somewhere around 500 to 600 officers, and they said: "You're being optimistically high. It's somewhere around 250."

I want to know whether or not this government is intent on improving the situation for our province by putting more front-line officers on the street, providing for them the training that is necessary, providing for them the opportunity for each of the municipalities to be able to afford that, because along with that comes the responsibility of ensuring that the municipalities are using those front-line officers to perform the duties that they're there to perform and not to chase somebody and say, "I think you might be breaking that glass, but if you pick it up and put it in the garbage, I won't charge you under this new law."

One of the other things that another member has made very clear is that if we don't take care of the root problem inside of why squeegee kids are doing what they're doing and take care of the drug addicts and some of the people who are supposedly breaking these laws by putting a piece of glass on the sidewalk or in a park—maybe what we should be doing is saying, "Let's spend a little bit of time on finding out what the root problem is."

So would you invest in the social programs that are necessary for those front-line officers to be able to do the jobs they are supposed to be doing? High-speed chases were spoken of, I think it was last week. In support of that I would say we need more than just one law that says the fines are going to increase. We need to put training in place. That's another thing the police officers talked about.

This is a multi-layered problem, and it needs to be looked at in terms of equipment, training and materials. The government made no commitment in terms of training. They made no commitment in terms of understanding that it was a multi-layered problem. Making the fines higher and telling people they are going to go to jail is a good idea—if they flee they're in trouble. But they didn't do the other things that were necessary. So the police officers are asking us, "Where's the pressure?"

Finally, if you're talking about safe streets, the one that I think is very important to the safety of our province is privatization of the police force. Checking Hansard, the Solicitor General did not commit that he would do anything in legislation to prevent privatization of police forces. I ask now: Make sure that that happens so we don't have somebody who is making \$6.80 an hour putting their life on the line, because they're not going to do it.

Finally, the bill itself: If you take the squeegees out of the squeegee kids' hands, they'll end up with a crowbar.

Ms Martel: I want to follow up on a point the member for Prince Edward-Hastings made with respect to enforcement.

The government would have you believe that people need to support this bill by the mere fact that because they're making it an offence to dispose of a condom or a piece of glass or a syringe in a public place, somehow

that's going to solve all the problems with respect to all those articles and all safety hazards that come about.

Does anyone honestly think that someone breaks a beer bottle in a sandbox in a public park and then waits around for the police to come and arrest him? Of course not. That's not what happens. In any event, if the police could catch that person now, under law they could charge him with mischief and a host of other charges, which could get at the problem.

The government would have people believe that this bill is all about how we're going to protect the public because we're putting some fines in place and we're going to dissuade people from carrying on with this kind of activity.

If you have someone who is using a syringe, who is shooting up, the federal offence they could be charged with would send them to jail. Does this group honestly think a \$500 fine for putting that syringe in a public place is going to dissuade someone from shooting up, when they could go to jail for that same offence? Of course not. So it's just a lot of hot air from the government side about how putting a fine in place for putting a syringe or a condom or a piece of glass in a public place is somehow going to improve or promote or guarantee public safety or the safety of our kids. That's ridiculous.

The police could do the job now if there were enough police. These folks don't wait around to get caught after they break bottles and glass.

The only thing that's going to do it is enforcement, and we've already heard that there are fewer police in place now than there were in 1995. So I don't know who is going to be dealing with enforcement, and that's another reason this bill isn't going to work.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond to the member for Brant. I want to pay a little respect to the member, because I take it from his remarks that it was his maiden speech, and we should all be patient and tolerant as they go through the paces of addressing the legislative issue before us. He did commit to speak to Bill 8, which Minister Flaherty introduced here on November 2 and, interestingly, he did read into the preamble. But I think it's important for those listening tonight, and for the member himself, to make clear the statement, "Are you for or against safety in our communities?" Where exactly, member for Brant, are we going to start that challenge of taking back our communities?

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I can only speak with some confidence about my riding of Durham. It's a rapidly growing riding and a very mixed riding, with respect to a lot of new urban areas and young families. Indeed, issues of parks and safety in our park places, which have been mentioned here, are an important issue of community safety.

I think Minister Flaherty has listened very carefully to the common concerns, not just in Toronto but indeed in all of Ontario. I think the member for Brant should also pay close attention to the long experience of the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. Mr Colle has clearly listened to

the people in the city of Toronto and is clearly at odds with your position on this bill. Once again I see a kind of moving around—we refer to it as flip-flopping, which is maybe a little overworked but nonetheless true. You're here, but if you listen to this and listen to your constituents, I think you'll find overwhelming evidence that people want their communities back and that they want them safe. Where do you draw the line? On the squeegee kids—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further comments and questions?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I would be interested to know whether the member for Brant believes that the situation with ophthalmologists in St Catharines should take precedence over this bill? We have to compare the priorities of the government. Should the government be moving forward with this bill at this time, or should we this evening be addressing the lack of time for ophthalmologists to see all their patients in the Niagara region?

The members would know, for instance—and you may know this yourself, Mr Speaker, because I raised it in the House the other day—that we have only 13 ophthalmologists to serve the whole Niagara region, and not all of them are full time.

What the government has done—

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: This has everything to do with this bill, because we're talking about priorities.

What the government has done is lumped us in with Hamilton. That would be like lumping you in Sault Ste Marie with Thunder Bay. They've lumped us in with Hamilton and said, "Well, there are 20 in Hamilton." Of course, the people in the Hamilton area know that they're already very busy. In fact, not all of those 20 are full-time ophthalmologists. I know the members in the Hamilton and Burlington areas would be very concerned to learn that people from St Catharines and the rest of the Niagara Peninsula will now be coming down to use up the time of ophthalmologists in Hamilton.

It is a very difficult drive from St Catharines to Hamilton. We have, on a per capita basis, the oldest population in the province. Many seniors will be adversely impacted by this. I think there is a solution: Remove the cap for ophthalmologists in the Niagara region, because we're underserved, so they can see far more people in the province. I want to know if the member thinks this is a priority.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): It's not surprising that the member for St Catharines talked about ophthalmologists and not about the bill, because the Liberals basically have no policy on crime. That was obvious in their campaign document, which devoted five paragraphs to crime, as opposed to our document, which devoted five pages to crime.

If you look at our campaign document, this legislation comes right out of the Blueprint, on page 31. Basically, we came back as a government for one reason: When we said we were going to do something, we did it. There it is

in our campaign document, and here we are doing it. To me, an Attorney General is a man or woman to be respected and whose word is his bond. In life, your word is who you are, and our word was that if elected we were going to implement this type of legislation. We were elected and now we have this legislation here.

It's not surprising that the Liberals have to talk about ophthalmologists instead of crime, because they really are soft on crime and have no policy on crime.

It's also important to realize where the five pages came from. They came from the Crime Control Commission going all over the province: to St Catharines, to northern Ontario, to the Sault, all over Ontario. And who was on the Crime Control Commission? The Attorney General himself. What he did was listen, along with his parliamentary assistant, Gerry Martiniuk from Cambridge. He listened to what people all over Ontario were concerned about, and they were concerned about this type of behaviour. So it's not surprising today that the Canadian Automobile Association, from Ontario, representing almost two million members endorses this legislation. It's not surprising because they're telling us what Ontario has told us: They want this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Levac: I want to speak to a comment from the member for Durham. Thank you for your patience and understanding. I appreciate the fact that not everyone standing and rising has the ability to articulate everything at one time. But watch out, I'm coming at you.

The member across, in his two-minute rebuttal, made it clear that he wanted to bring up the Crime Control Commission, those three Tory backbenchers charged with finding solutions to the crime problems. Originally the group consisted of Jim Brown, Scarborough West; Jim Flaherty, Durham Centre; and Bob Wood, London South. Gerry Martiniuk, Cambridge, replaced Mr Flaherty on his appointment as Minister of Labour. Jim Brown was forced to resign after a public comment that the Toronto Santa Clause parade was a boom day for local prostitutes. Brown claimed that fathers dropped their families off at the parade and then went back to search for a prostitute.

One of the things that I'd be concerned about was having members on that side making sure that everybody on this side is painted with a brush that says we're soft on crime and that we don't have the best interests of the public in mind. I would suggest to the members opposite that the people of Ontario recognize the skin that needs to get peeled away, and that as we slowly peel away that skin, we recognize that the 1,000 officers are not going to be 1,000 officers, they're going to be 100. This government is refusing to pass legislation that says to everybody: "We do not believe in privatizing, but we said that we're going to say it. Listen, we're not going to do this. We will talk to your associations privately and say, 'Don't worry about privatization,' but we're not going to pass legislation that says so." So put it up.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Maves: I also will attempt to deal with this bill today, a bill to address crime, a bill to attempt to make our streets safer for those in our community. When the members opposite talk about this bill they say, "Oh, it's a hot-button issue." It is. A hot-button issue is a hot-button issue because the people are telling us that it matters to them, that it's a hot-button issue. What matters to the people should matter to all of us in here. I don't understand why the members opposite have a problem with that, that the concerns of the public should be the concerns of the government.

Let me give you some examples. In 1995 there were a lot of people in this province who were very concerned about welfare. They thought the system was being abused. They thought there was something wrong with a system where even during positive and good economic times there was growth in the number of people going on the welfare system. They didn't like the fact that people were continually trapped for years and years on welfare, and they wanted the system changed. So we ran and said: "Yes, we're going to change the welfare system. We're going to help people get off the welfare system." Was it a hot-button issue? Sure it was, because everybody told us that it was an important issue and we had to deal with it. And the public was right. Oftentimes they're ahead of legislators. It was proven in 1995 that they were, and Mike Harris was right there alongside the public. He knew the things that mattered to them and he addressed them, and so did we as a government.

What's been the success on welfare? We've had 450,000 people leave welfare since 1995, the vast majority into jobs; others, their spouses have jobs.

Interjection.

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Mr Maves: "Some already might have had jobs," the member behind me says. But it's a great record on welfare reform.

Another hot-button issue back in 1995 and a hot-button issue today: Taxes are too high. They raised taxes 65 times between the two of them in 10 years, and the public said to us: "Taxes are too high. Do something about it."

I remember working five summers at General Motors in St Catharines, and the number one complaint of every one of the people that I worked with was on payday when they opened up their paycheques and they looked at the amount of tax coming off their cheques. They were furious. They worked all week, they worked hard, they were trying to raise families, they had a good wage, but at the end of the day, at payday, their net was decimated by high taxation. Of course it was a hot-button issue and of course Mike Harris and this government said, "We're going to do something about it." We promised to lower their income taxes and we've done that. Taxes are still important to a lot of folks.

Workers' compensation: It's out of control. We had a study in the Niagara region talking about work. Of the top three problems that businesses had, workers' compensation was I think number two on that list. High taxes

was number one. We fixed the workers' compensation system. Rates now on average are down about 25% since 1995. So we've listened, and that's why we're back here.

The members also like to say: "You're dealing with this. That must mean you're not dealing with any other problems. You don't care about any other problems." How ridiculous. How utterly ridiculous.

The family support plan: We passed a bill in the last Legislature to give us more authority to deal with people who weren't paying their fair share under the family support plan. We spend more money right now than ever before on child care. We've added more money into mental health. We're spending \$100 million to deal with the homeless. We're going to continue to do more, but this is a bill about our safe streets. Of course we're dealing with other issues; it's nonsense to say we're not.

We'll get right into the bill here. Is this a hot-button issue? Yes. Why is it a hot-button issue? Because people told us it was. People called our offices and said: "Do something about this problem. I can't walk down my street without being accosted. Do something." Mel Lastman called us, begged us, "Do something." The Liberal members—Mike Colle, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, here's his quote to the *Toronto Star*, "A lot of people are fed up with these punks." He said that he was going to propose legislation himself to give the police the right to seize squeegee equipment. He said it was a problem. The opposition justice critic, Michael Bryant, said in the media, "We cannot condone the effect within a civil society.... You should be able to walk the streets and not be harassed." That's why it's a hot-button issue, because it matters to the people, and that's why we're doing something about it. I'm not going to apologize for listening to the people of this province.

The police, the front-line police officers, a Metro Toronto police officer telling me: "Don't listen to those guys across the aisle who say it's not a problem. It is a problem. We need help. We need you guys to give us the ability to deal with it. I can tell you horror story after horror story about intimidation, harassment, damaging people's vehicles, physical assaults. Do something because with what we have right now we can't do anything about it." So is it a hot-button issue? Yes, and we're going to do something about it. This bill does that.

Let's talk about this, let's get right into the bill. What are some of the things? "Solicitation in aggressive manner prohibited." The member for Brant talked about how "aggressive manner" means a manner that is likely to cause a reasonable person to be concerned for his or her safety or security." It goes on, though. Let's talk about this. This is what the people on the other side of the aisle are opposed to. They think this is OK. This is something we don't think is OK. Let me read this, "Threatening the person solicited with physical harm, by word, gesture or other means, during the solicitation or after the person solicited responds or fails to respond to the solicitation." I think most people in Ontario would agree that should be an offence, that that should be something the police should be able to arrest someone over.

What's the next one? While I'm walking down the street, "obstructing the path of the person solicited during the solicitation or after the person solicited responds or fails to respond to the solicitation."

So someone asks me for something, or asks my mother who may be visiting in Toronto, 60 years old, walking down the street—sorry, mom, didn't mean to give away your age. Someone asks her for change. She says, "No, I don't have change; I don't want to give you change." She continues to walk down the street. You think it's OK that that person should now block the path of my mother? I think you're wrong. I think most Ontarians think you're wrong. That's why it's in here.

"Using abusive language during the solicitation or after the person solicited responds or fails to respond to the solicitation."

I guess that's OK. "No, I don't want to give you anything." Curse, swear, curse, swear. That's threatening; that's intimidating. It shouldn't be allowed. The police can't do anything about it right now. With the passage of the bill, they can.

How about this one? "Proceeding behind, alongside or ahead of the person solicited during the solicitation"

Is that OK? Do the people opposite think that's fine? If some person walking alone at night in Toronto refuses a solicitation, you think it's OK if that person should follow behind them and continue to solicit? You think it's OK that they should harass them by walking along beside them, continually asking for money? I don't, and I don't think the rest of the people in Ontario think it is.

"Soliciting while intoxicated by alcohol or drugs."

"Fine," the Liberals say. That's OK with them. It's not OK with people on this side of the aisle. I guess that's the difference.

There's another section in here:

"Solicitation of captive audience prohibited"

"No person shall ... solicit a person who is using, waiting to use, or departing from an automated teller machine."

Picture an 18-year-old here in Toronto going out to meet their friends on a school night or on a Friday night. They stop at an automatic teller by themselves, maybe a block away from their friend's house, and they turn around and there are three or four—or two or three; I don't care how many—people who just corner them and start to solicit them. Now this 18-year-old girl has just taken money out of the machine, she has some money to go out with her friends that night, and they start to solicit her for money. She can't say, "I don't have any money." They know she does. But you folks on that side of the aisle think it's OK that those people corner her and solicit her for money? I don't think it's OK. I don't think most Ontarians think it's OK. This bill will give the police the authority to do something about that.

Similarly, it's no longer going to be OK to solicit a person who is using or waiting to use a pay phone—same situation—or solicit a person who is in or on a public transit vehicle. Again, someone going home at night on public transit—they maybe worked late; maybe it's one

of our own night cleaners here in the building. They're done their shift late at night. They get on the subway. They go home. Someone continually harasses them, asking them for money or something else. That's OK? I don't think it is OK.

This bill says to the police, "You can now arrest that person if they are doing that." I think, folks, when you go through this bill, some of these things are hot-button issues, as I said, because the public has this common sense. The public already says: "This type of thing shouldn't be happening. The police should already be able to protect us on this." Police say: "We can't. We need some authority. We need an act from your Legislature." The Attorney General has responded.

Now we get to the point in the act where we talk about squeegeeing, which is a part of the act. It says, "No person shall ... while on a roadway, solicit a person who is in or on a stopped, standing or parked vehicle." No squeegeeing.

What happens today with squeegee kids? You leave Toronto—I go down University Avenue at nighttime when I'm going home after a 9:30 session. I've got to get on the Gardiner and then Queen Elizabeth Way to go back to Niagara Falls. If I go down University Avenue and get ready to get on the ramp to go up just past the Air Canada Centre, there are all kinds of squeegee kids there. You're captive. You're in your car. You're at a red light, cars all around you. All of a sudden they come up, and you see it all the time: "Squeegee your window?" "No, no, no." They just start squeegeeing your window. They do it on one side. You keep saying, "No, no, no." They go on the other side. When they're done: tap, tap, tap. "I want my money." "I told you, no." Scratch down the side of the car.

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Interjections.

Mr Maves: Sure it happens. If anyone thinks that doesn't happen, wake up. Talk to police officers.

I watched a guy the other day—I was heading out this time, because it's awful busy a lot of times going down by the Air Canada Centre, down University. I turned right down Front Street. Long lineup to get back on the Gardiner anyway. Corner of Front and Spadina: trapped again. Cars all around. Red light. Can't go anywhere. Squeegee kids come out: "Squeegee your window?" "No, no, no." This wasn't me; it was a guy right beside me, a young man, 30 years old maybe. "Squeegee your window?" "No, no, no." Gives him the finger. Nods his head. Makes a motion that he's going to kick the car. Why is that fair? Why is that OK? Why should we allow that to continue in Ontario? We shouldn't.

I know the members across the aisle agree that kind of thing shouldn't be allowed any more, but the police have said to us, and front-line officers have said to me, "Give us something so we can stop that kind of thing from happening." That's what this bill does.

I'm going to support this bill. The members opposite have often—one of them recently said they were going to talk about the bill in detail. They started to at the begin-

ning and then went off topic a little bit. I talked about the bill. I've read you actual sections right out of the bill. I think anyone listening at home is going to agree. I think most people at home are going to agree with that.

I know Mel Lastman is going to agree with this bill. I know Mike Colle at one point believed in this bill—sorry, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. I would imagine that Michael Bryant, the opposition critic, at one point believed in it. We know the police agree with this bill. Let's talk about this for one second, Speaker, if I may.

During question period last week, on a day when there were police officers in the whole place, the member from Essex got up and posed a question to the Premier about how under this bill charities wouldn't be allowed to solicit, people wouldn't be able to be on the sidewalk with a sign saying, "Car wash for kids." The Premier got up and he said, and I quote, "What I read into this question is a disgraceful lack of confidence in the police to use common sense in understanding the difference between aggressive panhandling, that which is interfering and causing safety concerns, and the case you raised."

He continued, "Anybody who would raise that kind of a question, particularly on this day, when a number of police officers are here, has a disgraceful lack of respect for a profession that has a far higher standard than you have."

In Hansard, Speaker, after that, it says, "Interruption." For people at home, just to let you know, "Interruption" meant that the police officers in the gallery began to applaud, and they continued to applaud until, of course, the Speaker asked them to stop. That, I think, speaks volumes that our police officers support this. The police officers support the Premier. The police officers supported this Premier in the election, I might add.

So we're answering a call, we're answering a request from all kinds of people. We're answering a request from people who call our constituency offices, largely in Toronto, about a lot of this stuff, but it's in other cities: in Ottawa, in Kingston and many others. We're answering their requests with this.

One of our members slipped me a note with a quote from Barry Farber. It says, "Crime expands according to our willingness to put up with it." Pretty interesting quote. If we're going to continue to sit back and just allow intimidation, allow harassment, allow people to follow people along the street, allow them to obstruct their path, if we're just going to sit back and say, "That's OK, you can go do that," crime expands according to our willingness to put up with it.

We on this side of the House agree with the police officers in this province, and on this issue, anyway, we agree with Mel Lastman, and on this issue we agree with Mike Colle on the Liberal side that something has to be done about this. Crime will expand according to our willingness to put up with it. We're not willing to put up with this any more.

That's why our Attorney General has brought in Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting

aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways.

So now that 60-year-old can walk down that street and feel a lot safer. As we bring in the 1,000 extra police officers that we're bringing in over the next few years, that feeling of safety will increase even more. As many people have said before, as I think our own Attorney General has said, you not only have the right to be safe, you should have the right to feel safe. People don't feel safe right now. This act is going to help those people, maybe just a little bit, but it's going to help them to feel a little bit safer. It's going to help them to be a little bit safer. Again, as we get those 1,000 officers on the street, it'll help them to be a little safer.

When we look at the quote, "Crime expands according to our willingness to put up with it," we on this side will say we're not willing to put up with it any more, we're not willing to put up with this. That's why we've introduced Bill 8 and that's why I and I'm sure most of my colleagues, if not all of my colleagues, on this side of the aisle are supporting the Attorney General and we're supporting Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I found it a little challenging to listen to the member for Niagara Falls talk about the way in which his government listens to the people and then simply responds to what they hear from the people.

I refer back to the government's throne speech when they made it very clear that the people this government wants to listen to are what they term to be the real people. The hard-working, taxpaying families are the ones who count as real people. They're the ones this government is inclined to listen to. Anybody else gets dismissed. We've seen that for four solid years. Anybody who doesn't fit within this government's neat little agenda is dismissed and not listened to at all. In fact, worse than that, they are made scapegoats for this government's political purposes.

The member says there was a concern among people about welfare fraud in the 1995 election. Was there a concern about welfare? Was there a concern about whether there might be some welfare abuse? Probably there was. I can tell you, there was not nearly the degree of concern that existed until this government, running as an opposition party at that point in time, decided to scapegoat people who were on welfare.

If people's memories are short, I would love to rerun some of the ads. Actually, I wouldn't love to rerun them because it's still painful to think about them. You know the SkyDome full of welfare bums that Mike Harris was going to get rid of? That's been the theme of this government. Find the people who don't count and figure out a way to get rid of them in order to fit your own political agenda. What did they do with the SkyDome full of welfare bums? They didn't get rid of them. They just cut their benefits and didn't give them a program that actu-

ally works in terms of training or job opportunities. That's not happening. They just forced more and more families, of whom 50% affected by that were children, into what are essentially poverty levels.

The scapegoats continued on for four years. Prior to the last election, it was teachers and trustees. Now the scapegoats are squeegee kids, because that fits this government's decision that they are going to hit a political hot spot by talking about their strength against crime, and of course we have references to the Crime Control Commission tonight. The Crime Control Commission didn't hear about squeegee kids when it came to Thunder Bay. That isn't exactly a big crime issue there. The government decided to make it a hot spot.

Some day the people who are real people, whom this government has made scapegoats out of, are going to rise up and force this government to listen to them.

2040

Ms Martel: I found the member for Niagara Falls' defence of Bill 8 as phony as the bill itself. The member would try to have the public who are watching out there tonight believe that just with the passing of this bill people who are at ATM machines will never have to be accosted again, young women who are waiting to use a pay phone should never fear that someone will come and bother them for money again, people who are walking down the street, maybe they've just come out of the Shoppers Drug Mart on Bay Street, will never have to see that panhandler there again—merely with the passing of this bill.

That is so phony, just like the bill is, because the only way this bill is going to work is if there is a police officer there on the spot, at the scene, who can witness it and who can make a charge.

What the Tories don't want to address, which is at the heart of this bill, the heart of the issue tonight, is that there aren't going to be any more police officers out on the street in our communities watching for these events as a result of the passage of this bill. If they were really listening to the police, then they would do something about the fact that there are fewer police in our communities in Ontario now than there were under the NDP government in 1995. That is a fact. There are fewer police officers under your watch now, four years later, than there were when the NDP was in government. You don't want to address that fact.

But the bill isn't going to work just because you pass it, because it requires that police be in place to lay the charges and there aren't going to be any more police in place when this bill is passed. There aren't going to be any more a year from now because the rate of attrition is so much higher than the 1,000 new officers who might come on board, if they're new officers. I suspect they're just replacing people who are going to retire. That's why the bill is so phony.

Mr Wettlaufer: I'd like to compliment the member from Niagara. It was a very good speech. He commented on the feelings of the people in his riding, the feelings of the police who were in to see him yesterday. I heard the

same message from the police who were in to see me. They're very concerned about squeegeeing and the problems it poses for the people, the older people particularly, the senior citizens, women, young mothers with children in their cars. They were very concerned about that.

But they were also expressing a strong concern about something the Liberals do not want to talk about and that was the disease possibility, young children picking up disease from exposure to needles and syringes and used condoms in the parks. We have five- and six-year-old kids in the parks, in sandboxes, playing on swings. These articles are disposed of by sick people and you people think that's all right. You have a problem. You are not listening to the mothers in your ridings. I listen to the mothers in my riding. Do you not have mothers who are concerned about their children like I do? Don't tell me you don't. I can't believe it. And you don't listen to the police, that's for darn sure.

Interjections.

Mr Wettlaufer: Isn't that lovely? Here we are. You think it's all right for this mother with a child in her car who has declined having her windshield cleaned to be intimidated. Listen to the heckling here, Mr Speaker. Just listen. I've touched a nerve. They don't like this.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I'm happy to stand up and speak at the end of the remarks by the member for Niagara Falls. I found it rather interesting that he tells a story about all the travails of downtown Toronto, about his problems of driving down University Avenue, without regard for the fact that it actually becomes York Street, the boundary of my riding. He tells a story and he leads us to believe in that story that his car was damaged and scratched. It's only by inquiry from this side of the House that in fact we find he's ingratiating the story.

The member from Cambridge, I believe it is, tells a story and suggests that he's the one, only him and the members on that side have any compassion for kids that play in the sandboxes. I know those sandboxes. I skate in north Regent Park, in an area where we have a problem with the disposal of needles, and nothing will be done. Any clear-minded person knows that there will be no positive impact from a bill. The false security that the member from Niagara Falls spoke about that is supposed to come from having a piece of legislation that all of a sudden will make people feel better when they draw that money out of a bank machine is the most ridiculous thing I've heard.

You talk about addictions and you talk about needles and you talk about people who need help, but you offer none. You Bill 8, simply put, is a bill that is written by your pollster. It's great politics. The people, having encountered gridlock, who come from Brampton and other communities, at the end of an hour-long ride that ought to take 25 minutes because you're allowing our city to grind to a halt, get off at that exit at York Street or at Jarvis Street and are confronted with a symbol that frustrates them. But the real frustration of the people is that in this greater Toronto area you can no longer move

in an easy way from point A to point B. That's the shame. This bill simply covers up all the problems that you've contributed to.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Maves: Member from Thunder Bay, let me just read you a couple of comments about social assistance: "... 450,000 people off social assistance since we took office," said David Hughes, director of Grey County Social Services. "I can tell you that we've got more individuals leaving the system for employment than we have had in a long, long while. We've had more individuals going into education and training programs."

There's another quote. Bob McNorgan, London administrator for Ontario Works said: "The existing London program in the non-profit sector has helped individuals get very real, hands-on experience and has boosted their chance of getting a job. Those I've spoken to are very pleased they had the opportunity, and they felt they acquired some tangible benefits. Numbers are increasing; client experience appears to be positive with the workfare system." Those are people in the field telling us that and that's why people are getting off social assistance.

I toured with Janet Ecker my own social assistance office about a year ago, and one of my workers said: "Twenty-eight of 30 of my caseload left this month, 28 of them that I know of. I can tell you exactly where they got their jobs." So they are getting jobs.

Member from Sudbury, Mr Smitherman, of course the problem doesn't get solved with the passage of a legislation. I never said that, never intimated that. I said if it makes people feel that much better, if it does make people that much safer, that's a step in the right direction. It's the police that said if you don't do something like this, crime will expand. You guys want to do nothing. You want to sit back and do nothing, let the aggression continue, let the intimidation continue. You don't care.

Crime expands according to our willingness to put up with it. We're not willing to put up with it any more. Why don't you stand up for the people of this province and vote for this bill?

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Smitherman: It's a great pleasure for me to join this debate if the minister from Ottawa would just pipe down and let me. It's interesting that we have yet another Tory bill so inappropriately titled. I've decided that the proper name for this bill is an act to exacerbate the lack of police resources in downtown Toronto.

This is a bill about mistaken priorities. Members opposite have trotted out the speeches prepared no doubt by the Attorney General, who is here with us tonight, and talked about the thousand new police officers. But I'd like to know, given that this problem is so much focused in Toronto, why you don't trot out the count of the new police officers in the city of Toronto. The numbers are troubling. That is covered over by the government.

What we've got before us is an example of a government that is unable, or perhaps just unwilling, to distinguish between nuisance behaviour and criminal

activity. I must say that I find it particularly offensive that the Attorney General would go and visit the corner of Seaton and Dundas to try and highlight the problems with respect to safe streets, to try and highlight the problems with respect to squeegee kids.

Isn't it ironic that the minister made this announcement within just a few blocks of where in the time since the election four drug-related murders have taken place, in the same neighbourhood where the member from Wentworth-Burlington and the Crime Control Commission had one of their hearings at Central Neighbourhood House in my riding on Ontario Street, where the issue of squeegee kids did not come up.

2050

This is an issue where the government's priorities are mistaken. Danny Kevin Cousins died November 10, Exekile Stewart died November 4, Ernie Soueidan died October 12, Douglas Wyton died September 23, but where is the government's commitment to dealing with the problems of drugs and guns in our neighbourhoods? It's clear that wasn't at the top of the polling. It's clear that this initiative stems simply from the Tories' public opinion polling. Otherwise, how would we think about introducing a bill to deal with squeegee kids and highlighting that in the same densely populated neighbourhoods gripped by the fear of death by gunfire? Apparently the right to live in safe communities is limited to those who vote Conservative.

The member from Niagara Falls said, "Crime expands according to our willingness to put up with it." Apparently, the absence of concentrated effort by your government to deal with the problems of death by guns, that are drug-related, is an example that in communities that have less voice because of their impoverished needs you're willing to put up with that and tolerate it.

I say to the government, shame on you. Where are your government's initiatives to help local police forces deal with the challenges of real street-level crime like trafficking in crack cocaine? Where are the government's initiatives to help local police forces deal with the challenge of too many guns on our city streets? All we see from this government, the only thing that it speaks up about with respect to guns, is that we should oppose the federal government's gun control registration.

What this legislation signals more than anything else is that the government is content to allow some people to murder one another within feet of where children play, sleep and go to school; it's that they have surrendered neighbourhoods in my riding to drug dealers and thugs, real criminals. Instead of arresting people for selling drugs to our children, we have a government that will be arresting kids for cleaning car windows.

Let's take a look at what this legislation does. Thornbury, a community on Georgian Bay near where my mother lives, in the riding I believe of the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, will no longer be allowed to walk that beautiful bridge over the Beaver River and collect funds for local charities. Watch out;

lemonade stands may be next on the Attorney General's list.

Look at the penalty for this first offence: \$500, the dirty water offence; for the second offence the penalty is the same as for theft under \$5,000, for assault, for disturbance of religious worship and for destruction of property under \$5,000.

Contrast this with the kinds of initiatives that we see from the federal government. One says that all we see is a need for more laws, more jail sentences to make our communities safe. I've been to California and to Texas and to Florida, and if the rates of incarceration were reflective of a safe society, then surely the United States would be the safest place in the world, but it is not.

We know how much Michael Murphy and Christine Todd Whitman and probably even Pat Buchanan influence the government opposite, and it is demonstrated in this kind of torted-up bill that is before us. The government would do well to reject a made-in-America approach to justice.

We need to work with local communities to get them involved in safety in their own communities, to support initiatives on a case-by-case basis, on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis, on a street-by-street basis, to make them safe. That's what will make them safe: initiatives to try and make sure that women can't be pulled into dark corners, by eliminating those dark corners, by cutting back hedges, by increasing lighting, by those sorts of practical things, not by a bill which by its very design and nature is intended only to pay lip service to the real problems.

Let's look at the state of our city and let's be very clear about it: Squeegee kids are not a healthy sign of the state of our city. Too many people are struggling to get by in a place where the cost of living is too high. All those members who sit in this Legislature and are here tonight who come from outside the greater Toronto area know this and they've seen this in a very direct way because of the impact of the shortage of housing on their Toronto accommodation costs.

Think about what it must be like then for poorly skilled young people who have found themselves so disconnected from society. I'm not suggesting that we should accept a burgeoning underclass, but I'm afraid this bill says that you are. My opinion is that we need to work in a contrary fashion, and I believe it is in the name of these very people that government has a responsibility to step up to the plate and be part of the solution.

I think a defining characteristic of Canada has always been the extra efforts we make to ensure that the gap between the richest and the least fortunate does not grow. But this bill offers nothing: nothing that acknowledges a pattern of abuse in their lives, nothing that acknowledges a poor education. The rhetoric of members opposite screams out, "Why don't you just get a job?" Based on the opportunities available to this group of people with the skills they have, they did.

Let's be very clear here. Your crackdown may have the net effect of driving kids underground, from intimidat-

tion to destruction, from nuisance to crime. The options with the skill set that is available to these kids are limited: smash-and-grab crimes, drug dealing, prostitution. These are not good options, and they are worse options than those they are pursuing at the moment. Look at the choices your policies are forcing on already marginalized kids.

I would ask a question of members opposite who talk so knowingly, so knowledgeably, about these squeegee kids on the streets of Toronto: Have you ever stopped and talked to one—not through the windscreen of your car as you're saying no to their attempts to offer you a service, but have you ever talked to them and gotten to know them?

The SHOUT Clinic, an organization in my riding that works with street-affected youth, tells us that the average squeegee kid is 21 years of age, male, 60% from Ontario. They come from a variety of economic classes, and more than half of them were thrown from their homes. Kids with problems or hardened criminals? We have a choice to make about the future of their lives, to help them. Sending them off, incarcerating them, making them even better criminals is the choice that you as a government have focused upon. This government chooses to do the cheap-hit piece first. There's nothing here that acknowledges the need to work with street youth on addiction issues, on basic literacy, on job skills. All the government offers is a great big stick to whack these intimidating kids upside the head.

I make an offer to the government. I'd be willing to work with you to design a program that meaningfully deals with the problem that confronts us on our city streets. It's real, but you make no such demonstration of interest. Like so many other things, the stick is all you know: the rhetoric associated with the introduction of a bill that offers everything in its title and nothing in reality.

Until we see a real interest in doing the hard work, I have no choice but to vote against this bill. It's shallow, it's cheap and it won't work. It's a betrayal of the legacy of our fine province and our country.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Ms Martel: I appreciated the comments that have been made by the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, and I want to follow up in this way: I have been trying to sort out why it is the government wants to use this bill to make squeegee kids criminals. I just cannot for the life of me figure out why this is a priority for this government at this time.

You're talking about a group of young people which is primarily centred in Toronto. I think there's one squeegee person in Sudbury, who has been doing it for years and who no one complains about. We have a group of young people in Toronto who, probably because they can't work anywhere else because we haven't seen much from the government's youth job strategy, whatever it is, are trying to do at least something that has nothing to do with getting onto social assistance. They're trying to make their way in the world.

That's something this government's usually one to preach about as they're booting people off the social assistance system. You would think that this was something the government would encourage, because they would certainly rather people have a job than be on the public purse, as they so nicely describe it.

We've got a group of young people who by and large have been trying to do that, support themselves, just get by, and the government's decided now that they're public enemy number one. I can't figure out why. What is it that you so dislike about these kids? What is it that you so dislike about them trying to earn a living and not being on social assistance? What is it that you so dislike about them? Is it that some of them have long hair? Maybe some of them have earrings in their ear and their nose. Maybe you don't like their appearance. Maybe you think they should have a bath. Is that what it is?

2100

What are you doing spending legislative time to put forward this bill, which reflects your priority, which is to make criminals out of these young people? Give them a break. There are surely more serious criminal issues that the government should spend its time dealing with, as the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale so appropriately pointed out. If you want to deal with crimes, deal with serious crimes. Leave this stuff alone, because it's all smoke and mirrors.

Mr Bradley: I recognize, when the member speaks about the amount of time that police officers have to deal with matters of great importance, that the number of police officers who are available in communities across the province is a very significant factor. It has been said on many occasions in this House that despite all of the bravado and bragging, in fact, today, the number of officers on the streets of various communities—trained people officers, people who serve our communities so well—is actually fewer than it was four years ago, and perhaps even five years ago when the New Democratic Party was in power.

Numbers do mean something, interestingly enough. If you talk to the individual officers who were here the other day, or talk to them in your region, your own part of the province, you'll find that one of the real concerns they have is their ability to respond to the many obligations they have as officers today. There are some excellent new programs that various governments have brought in, including this government, which have officers doing things that are not as traditional as they used to be, such as a lot of the community policing initiatives that are taking place. When they move into that field or when they have a liaison with a secondary school, that takes officers from one area and places them in another. In order to do the job appropriately, what they require are more individuals on the front lines to be able to serve the people of a community.

What I have a concern about is that when we pass legislation to deal with a number of matters, we have to ensure we have the appropriate staffing levels, whether it's in government itself or certainly with police, to be

able to handle it. I do not see on the horizon that kind of net increase in the number of police officers to handle the new initiatives.

Mr O'Toole: Member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, I must compliment you. You really did address some of the issues you have some discomfort with on the legislation, which is an appropriate part of debate.

I think the fundamental difference here is that I don't see anywhere in the 20/20 Plan, which I have a copy of and which was part of their platform—there's virtually nothing here, and if you look at the record of the Liberal Party generally, federally, the Young Offenders Act has probably defined some of the problems we're in with our youth today, realizing that hard work and effort is really the right road to be on.

Furthermore, the NDP position I think is clearly on your side. They had several commitments, and one of those commitments of course was to cut the Harris tax cut. They wanted to spend more money. They wanted to stay on a spending spree, restore the worker protection laws, sort of making sure the labour legislation was re-unbalanced, and get tough on polluters. It's kind of a common theme agenda.

But I want to move back to the member's comments. I think there are a number of initiatives here. I am sure the honourable member would agree that you would like to find your streets safe for a whole variety of reasons. You would like, I am sure, to send the right signal that it's not appropriate to aggressively panhandle or solicit. Maybe it's a language problem here. If, on the other side of that, his argument is that he agrees with disorder, then clearly he can't vote for this bill, and I can understand that. But I think the people of Ontario, not just the people in Durham but the people I know right here in this city, many of whom are retired, have felt the threat, and Mel Lastman himself is speaking out for those people, and we're supporting this bill.

Mr Caplan: I want to congratulate the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale. I think he really put the debate in a very good perspective. This is about priorities. Police officers have been cut back. In 1995, there were considerably more police than there are today. We have a smaller resource and we're asking them to take on a responsibility here when they should be investigating, pursuing criminals, making our streets safer, dealing with traffic. Traffic and gridlock is one of the major problems that this city is facing, not some young person who cleans a windshield.

That's what this debate is all about, it's about priorities, where we are going to put the resources of this province to the greatest amount of use for the greatest benefit of people. It's ironic that we have this debate on a day when we learn that this government is going to cut \$800 million from elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. It is disgraceful. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, our cut minister, has said that it is in fact a leaked document from this government, that it is their intention to make those kinds of

reductions. That's what people in my riding are talking about.

They want access to special education classes; they want transportation to schools; they want the ability to afford post-secondary education; they want training opportunities; they want a brighter future for children—for all children. They don't want children to end up on the streets having to eke out a meagre existence cleaning windshields.

The priorities of this government are defined in symbolic gestures, in stretching resources and putting them in places where they're not being appropriately used, by taking monies out of much-needed educational opportunities. This government has the wrong priorities and has the arrogance to suggest that they listen to the people of Ontario.

Mr Smitherman: I'd like to thank all members for their very thoughtful heckling and responses to my remarks.

Firstly, I'd like to make an apology to the member from Kitchener Centre for mistakenly saying Cambridge. I'm not sure, I haven't been following the subject that closely, but I understand the Toronto Star, that rag that you just referred to—don't they own a paper in your home town now?

I wanted to really direct my comments a little bit at the member from Durham. I note he says that not supporting this piece of legislation is the same as acknowledging that we want to have chaos on our streets. I paraphrase, but I think I've got the thrust right. Perhaps he didn't listen to my speech. My speech is really saying and calling out to the government, "Look at your priorities and work with me to deal with real problems."

The issues of police officers have been dealt with. I made a speech which talked about five murders in my riding, four in a very small and concentrated part of the city of Toronto, drug-related and mostly by guns. But I didn't see the Attorney General wanting to hop to his feet and suggest how he could be helpful, and I didn't see anyone saying that they ought to refer this to the Solicitor General and see what he would be prepared to do on behalf of that great law-and-order government to deal with a real, pressing problem, which is that I've got gunplay going on in places where kids go to school, in places where kids play and in places where they sleep.

The government doesn't respond because they have no response to that because these are people who don't matter to them because they're low-income people, because they're concentrated in that area. This bill speaks to the reality of your government, which is that you're prepared to allow our city to be divided up into areas, some where it is safe to go and others where it's not, and I say shame on the government for this. I say shame on the Attorney General for not paying any attention to my remarks which have been directed at him and for not standing up and saying what that government will do to deal with the problem of guns and murder in our city.

Ms Martel: I am pleased to join in the debate tonight and I want to begin by saying that the government

pretends that this bill is about public safety. I have heard a number of their speakers make that allegation here this evening. I use the word "pretend" very particularly, very specifically, because the fact of the matter is, except for some minor exceptions, many of the acts that the government is now going to deem to be provincial offences are already acts which could be enforced under existing law.

For example, the bill talks about hitchhiking and makes that an offence, when in fact under the Highway Traffic Act now hitchhiking is already an offence and can be dealt with.

2110

There are other provisions under the Highway Traffic Act as well that could deal, if they had to, with the matter of squeegee kids blocking exits, blocking pedestrian crossways. For example, under subsection 140(4) of the Highway Traffic Act it says that no pedestrian shall leave the curb so as to make it impracticable for the driver of a vehicle to yield the right of way to a pedestrian; or subsection 144(22), with respect to pedestrian crossing, which says, "Where portions of a roadway are marked for pedestrian use, no pedestrian shall cross the roadway except within a portion so marked." Thirdly, soliciting rides prohibited under section 177 of the Highway Traffic Act, which says that no person shall "stop or attempt to stop a motor vehicle for the purpose of selling or offering to sell any commodity or service to the driver or any other person in the motor vehicle." So, any of those things that the government would now try to call offences could technically be dealt with under the Highway Traffic Act.

If you look at serious threats from aggressive pan-handlers, and that's right in the title of the bill, it is a fact that unlawful behaviour can now be addressed under federal law as it already stands. So the suggestion we've heard repeatedly here tonight, that somehow this law is going to promote safety, that there are new and specific and very important changes that are going to promote safety, is completely false.

The second thing that has to be addressed is the suggestion that now that we've put in place a fine for the offence of disposing of a syringe or a needle or a glass or a condom in a public place, if we put that into law and have a fine, it's somehow going to stop people from undertaking that activity. It's completely ridiculous. Think about it.

I've heard the member from Waterloo Centre ask people if we care about kids. Well, I have two of my own, and yes, I do care about kids. But I'm not silly enough to think that someone who goes and breaks glass in a sandbox is going to sit there and wait for the police to show up so that he or she can be charged.

The only way the bill works to promote and protect public safety is if there is a police officer there witnessing the event at the scene of the crime, so to speak. The allegation that because we passed this law and put in place a fine, somehow people who are involved in dump-

ing syringes in public places are going to stop because they're going to get a fine is ridiculous.

Someone who is using a needle is not going to be stopped by the mere threat of a \$500 fine if they dispose of that needle in a public place. They could go to jail under federal law for using a needle in the first place, never mind where they dump it, just for the act itself.

Why are you trying to pretend with the public here this evening that somehow we're going to deal with a problem, which is a serious problem with respect to needles and condoms and glass in public places, somehow we're going to resolve this problem, do away with this problem, get rid of it by passing a law that will now fine people for doing that? It's just ridiculous.

Nothing works in this bill without police enforcement. If there's not an officer there who witnesses that happening, nothing is going to be done, nothing is going to change, and those people who are undertaking that kind of activity aren't going to be stupid enough to wait for the police to appear to be charged.

So let's get real when we talk about if we care about glass, if we care about needles. Of course we care, and there's nothing in this bill that's going to change that problem.

It's also worth pointing out that the reason nothing is going to change is because the real issue that needs to be dealt with, which isn't dealt with in this bill, is police enforcement. How many police do we have in the community to deal with the new provisions in this bill, to deal with other crimes? The fact of the matter is—and I know the government doesn't like to hear this, because they would like to portray to the police that they have been doing so much for police—that StatsCan, which is not a political outfit, has no political axe to grind, doesn't support any political party, Statistics Canada has made it very clear that in 1994 there were 20,737 police officers in Ontario. The latest figure shows that there are now only 20,454 police officers in Ontario. There are 283 fewer police in Ontario now than in 1995, and that figure doesn't even take into account the increase in population.

Let's go a little bit further. I know people don't like to hear what StatsCan has to say. I know the government doesn't like to hear what StatsCan has to say, because it flies in the face of everything they've been trying to tell police officers. The fact is that on average, if you look at the number of police officers who can retire, 5,730 will be eligible to retire between now and the year 2001. We have a situation in this province where in a year and a half we are going to have almost 6,000 police officers retire, and the government is doing nothing about it. The government has no plan to deal with that. It's not even clear whether the thousand police officers they talk about who might find employment are new police officers or whether they're just going to be filling the positions of those who are retiring.

If the government really wanted to do something about public safety, if they really were here to address public safety—and we know people are concerned about public

safety—then they would really be here tonight talking about what they're going to do about violent crime.

What's the government going to do to respond to swarming and that horrible, tragic incident that occurred Sunday in this very city? What's the government doing when it comes to hate crimes and those who foster hate about people in our community based on religion, based on sexual orientation, based on race and on language etc? What are we doing when it comes to domestic violence and the many women in our community who are suffering from that? What are we doing about home invasions and the hundreds of people, many seniors, who are becoming more concerned about that in their communities?

I heard one of the members earlier talk about his daughter and how he was worried about what would happen to her if she came to Toronto to go to university. I appreciated that. He was worried about her being aggressively—I don't want to use the word "attacked," but having an aggressive panhandler come at her. I have to say to the member, think about this: I'll bet there are more women in Ontario now who are at risk of domestic violence in their own homes than will ever be at risk from an aggressive panhandler.

If you look at the statistics on domestic violence, on sexual assault, those numbers are growing; they are not lessening. There are more women in this city and in this province who daily have more to fear from violence in their own homes than any kind of unsafe feeling they may ever feel from someone who is an aggressive panhandler. We need to recognize that, because that's a real, serious issue around violence that we should be dealing with.

I'll bet there are more women in Scarborough right now who are more fearful of home invasions than they were ever fearful, or will ever be fearful, about squeegee kids. I'll bet that's a reality in Scarborough these days, and it certainly has been in the last number of months.

This bill is all about how to get squeegee kids and panhandlers off the street, and the government threw in some stuff on glass and needles and syringes in order to broaden the scope to make it appear to the public that they were doing a little bit more.

But I think the member for Simcoe North hit the nail right on the head in his remarks when he talked about how Toronto depends on the tourism industry and how we can't have tourists seeing those panhandlers on our streets. Get rid of the human debris. Get the human garbage off our streets. We don't want the tourists to see that. They may not want to come back.

It's a sad and sorry day when the priority of this government is to go after squeegee kids and panhandlers when we have such serious crime in Ontario.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I wanted to get up and compliment the member for Nickel Belt on her analysis of this bill. There are parts of it that maybe she didn't emphasize as much as others and indeed did get into a lot of the social dilemmas that are rampant in our society today. I don't think any of us want to minimize the difficulty with the swarmings, home invasions, the

spousal abuse and those sorts of things. I don't think any of us want to minimize that. But to stand up here and say that is the only thing and therefore we shouldn't address the issues we are talking about in this bill leaves unsaid those things that should be commented on.

2120

Indeed, some of us who come to Toronto on occasions, who don't live here, aren't used to people swarming up to the car and wanting to do things to it that they shouldn't. I see the member from Rosedale isn't here, but I had an experience with a squeegee person who wanted to clean my windshield. It was raining, and I didn't want them to. The windshield wipers were on. After opening the window several times, I had to physically grab the weapon so it wasn't going to damage—

Interjection.

Mr Johnson: A lot of us who visit from out of town aren't used to that. It was an experience. If the light hadn't turned green and I hadn't been able to stop it, I'm not sure what I would have done. I don't think I'd want to call a policeman, or that sort of thing. But it is something we don't find at the stoplights in Listowel.

Mr Levac: I want to compliment the member for Nickel Belt for her kind words, the compassion she shows in her comments and her true feelings towards the issues of the day. I also want to compliment the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale for an eloquent explanation of why we on this side believe there are problems with the bill. The problems with the bill go beyond the content. It goes into the conversation that the member for St Catharines began, and I want to add to his concerns about the police.

In my discussions with the police in the last few days and previously, they have expressed concern about what this government and the Solicitor General have yet to commit to do that would help us with this problem. There are two items that I would bring to the government's attention that need their commitment and their legislation immediately, just as fast as you are able to put this legislation on the books.

One is the understaffed police force. It has been said time and time again, and there have been no denials from the other side, that we supposedly have 1,000 new police officers coming through this mandate. It doesn't exist. The police themselves are telling you, and in the little meetings you've been having with them you can't deny that you've been asked by them, to make the 1,000 a true 1,000; you're not committing to that.

The second thing they've asked you about, in their lobbying and their important adventures into understanding why the government won't commit to that, is this government's inability to commit publicly, in legislation, to the public of Ontario that, we will not privatize our police force. You haven't done so. You're not doing so, because it goes against your philosophy of privatizing our province. I hope you change your minds, because the police want you to.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the Safe Streets Act. As a new

member in this chamber, it's very interesting to see how this Legislature operates. The members opposite essentially adopt the slogan that: "Whatever it is, we're against it. It doesn't matter if it's in the best interests of the people of Ontario; if it's brought forward by this government, we're against it."

I appreciate that we on the government side of this Legislature operate as a relatively cohesive unit. That's one of the reasons that we're able to pass so much good law and this province has prospered in the way it has. When you're dealing with a bill as important as this, it's important to leave the political rhetoric aside. I would encourage the people who are here today and the people who are watching through their television sets to consider what others have said about the need for this legislation. While the member for Nickel Belt talks about the fact that we don't need this legislation, that the Highway Traffic Act is comprehensive enough to deal with any aspect of this problem that is required—by the way, I disagree, because the Highway Traffic Act has no applicability to private property and would be relatively useless. That is why we have so many chiefs of police and other representatives from law enforcement agencies coming forward and advocating and asking this government to pass some meaningful laws, so that when the police are out on the streets trying to do their job they have the tools they need.

But it's not just the police who have asked for this new legislation. It's also the mayor of this city. I represent Willowdale, which is part of Toronto, and the mayor of our city has been pleading for legislation to deal with this problem. It's not just the mayor and the police; it's also the head of the hotel association.

Mr Bradley: I hope that the member for Willowdale is as anxious to pass other legislation that the mayor of Toronto is imploring the provincial government to pass. We know that we'll be able to count on his support for the other initiatives being brought forward by the mayor of the city of Toronto.

I want to ask the member for Nickel Belt, because she knows this area well, whether she feels that, with some of the people who are what we refer to as panhandlers, if indeed there are sufficient supports there for people who have psychiatric problems. We have had announcements of even further numbers of psychiatric hospitals being closed in the province and the individuals who are in those hospitals are supposedly to come out into communities to receive appropriate treatment and support. A number of the individuals, not all, who find themselves on the streets of a major metropolitan city such as Toronto are individuals who have experienced some psychiatric problems and have no place to go. Sadly, in many cases their families have abandoned them. Sadly, in many cases their friends essentially have abandoned them because they have a severe psychiatric problem.

We have moved towards deinstitutionalization. That's another argument. I'm not convinced, personally, that

that is a wise thing to do when you don't have the supports back in the community. But I'm wondering about the member's opinion of the supports which would be available and the treatment which would be available for former psychiatric patients and those who are still experiencing psychiatric problems, because often, as I say, they're lost to families, they're lost to friends, they're left in the street to beg. They often need some very strong supports to get them back on track and this bill does not address that in an adequate fashion.

The Acting Speaker: Response, member for Nickel Belt.

Ms Martel: I want to thank the members for Perth-Middlesex, Brant, Willowdale and St Catharines for their comments.

Let me respond in this way to the member for St Catharines: I suspect there are a number of those folks who are on the street right now who really should be receiving some kind of treatment somewhere else and be off the street, and they can't find it. That leads me to ask in a serious way to the government, what is the bill really all about? If I thought the bill was going to do something serious about public safety, I'd be supporting it. I have kids too and I worry about their safety. I worry when I take them up and down the streets of Toronto too. But I recognize that the only way this bill is going to work is if you have police in the community to enforce it. The bill doesn't speak to that, and I wouldn't expect it would, because the government record is clearly moving the other way.

We have a situation that in 1999, according to Stats Canada, there are fewer police officers on the streets in Ontario than there were in 1995. Not only are there fewer now in sheer numbers; if you added population in, the situation would be even worse. Coming down the track in front of us is a train that will run us over, because we have at least 6,000 more officers who will retire and we have no strategy to deal with that. If I thought the bill could even work, could even be monitored, could even be enforced, I would support it, but I know it won't and that's why I think it's so phony.

What worries me is that what is really at the heart of what is being dealt with here has very much to do with what the member for Simcoe North said in his comments. We don't want the tourists to see the human garbage, the human debris. We don't want the tourists to see the people suffering from mental illness who are panhandling, those people who are panhandling who have the smell of liquor on their breath, the squeegee kids who have a ring through their nose. I think that's what this is really all about and I regret the government has chosen to use this bill to deal with that issue in this way.

The Acting Speaker: It being close to 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 18 November 1999

Jeudi 18 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 18 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 18 novembre 1999

*The House met at 1004.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Good morning. The resolution we have before the House today reads: If the government's current initiatives fail to correct the doctor distribution problem throughout Ontario, then the government should proclaim sections of the Savings and Restructuring Act, 1996, allowing it to attach geographic areas to all new billing numbers issued by the Ministry of Health.

I rise today to talk about a topic which all of us in this Legislature, save and except perhaps a few people in a few areas, deal with every day in growing numbers and with growing frequency, and that is the problem with doctor distribution around the province of Ontario. Many of us MPPs quite often have phone calls from people in distress who can't find a family doctor in their hometown; people who the odd time are mistreated by their family doctor because that poor doctor has so many patients they're looking at in their community that they're suffering from burnout. One patient told me, "I wanted a second opinion and my doctor told me, 'If you want a second opinion then I'm not going to have you on my patient list any more.'" I don't want to say all doctors are doing that. I just point out that these are some of the stresses some doctors are under with the problem we currently have.

We look at the problem and there are a lot of solutions—some of which I'm going to talk about today—being proposed and a lot of attempts being undertaken to address the problem. The public looks at the problem and says: "Why don't we just have more doctors in the province? Why don't we just open the floodgates to foreign countries and from other places in Canada and have other provincial doctors come in, open up more spaces in medical schools and so on?" But the problem with that is what we have in Ontario—and many people recognize this—is a problem with distribution, not necessarily supply.

In fact, a very recent study by Dr Ben Chan from the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences says that the Ministry of Health and the OMA have long recognized that there's a geographic physician maldistribution

problem in the province and have initiated a number of programs to address the issue, some of which I'll quickly refer to.

He goes on to say that the physician supply has remained remarkably stable over the seven-year time period of this study. His study is from 1991 to 1998. He further says that many models of physician growth developed by non-physician academics predict that physician supply will keep pace with the rate of population growth and aging, and that even with the 10% reduction of medical school enrolment there will be an accumulating surplus of physicians by the year 2010.

1010

There are other studies that also indicate that right now we've got enough physicians in the province of Ontario. The problem is with the distribution. In many areas of the province there just aren't enough doctors. Doctors seem to continually set up practices in places where they're educated, be it in the Kingston area, Toronto, Ottawa. In fact, there's one quote I read in a recent newspaper from a doctor in my area talking about how there's such oversupply in Toronto that some doctors actually advertise for patients. I think most people around the province would consider this remarkable.

I come from an area, Niagara, which suffers from one of the biggest problems of poor distribution. We have one doctor for every 1,526 people, and that's one GP. That doesn't include specialists; that's one general practitioner. Kingston has 1 to 732; it's the best in the province and this is general practitioners. Ottawa is 1 to 859. Toronto is 1 to 871.

Specialists, of course, locate in many of these areas where there are teaching facilities and there's a problem of specialist distribution across the province. Interestingly enough, Niagara isn't as poorly off on specialists as they are on GPs.

The other problem that we have in Niagara is that we have the oldest practising doctors in Ontario. The age profile that we have is the oldest. So the problem is going to get worse and worse unless we do something.

There's several initiatives that the government had undertaken, many in co-operation with doctors. Incentive grants: They've been around for quite a while, ranging up to \$40,000 over a period of time to get them to go to underserved communities. There's recently \$30 million to help 27 small rural hospitals retain doctors; a \$70-an-hour sessional fee for doctors; a physician job registry. The Ministry of Health is hosting health professionals recruitment tours. We're discounting fees for doctors

who go to overserviced areas to try to get them out of those areas. We have brought in nurse case practitioners where they can work in conjunction with doctors to try to solve this problem and look at some of the less serious cases in their office.

It seems that back in 1996 this legislature passed Bill 26, the Savings and Restructuring Act, and in that bill we had a section which would allow us to manage billing numbers. What this basically would do, in its simplest form, is that when new doctors come into the province or new graduates get ready to practise—right now they can get a billing number and they can begin to practise anywhere they want to in the province of Ontario. The trend is still that they continually locate in these overserviced areas and don't go to the underserviced areas. What managing of billing numbers would simply do is say, "Look, we no longer need physicians in the following centres: Toronto, Ottawa and a few others. If you want to practise anywhere else in the province of Ontario, we need physicians. You can go anywhere but Toronto. You can go anywhere but perhaps Ottawa." Even if billing number restrictions are done maybe for a certain period of time so that people can go to other communities, even if they are surrounding communities of the Toronto or Ottawa area, nearby communities, they can get out and into those communities, as we're trying to do with medical training programs, get them out into communities to try to get new doctors to see what it's like to live in a community outside of a major urban centre. Hopefully they'll like that and then we'll retain there.

Even if managed billing numbers are done for a three-year or five-year period, it will hopefully increase the exposure as we're trying to do the medical training right now and let these doctors want to practise in some of these areas.

I met yesterday with the folks from PAIRO, the inter-nists of Ontario—very convincing arguments. They were concerned about billing numbers. They talked to me about several studies. They gave me quite a bit of literature and, to their credit, I think PAIRO is working very hard to try to find solutions to this problem. I think they deserve to be heard even more by the Ministry of Health of this province and by the OMA and I encourage that to continue.

One of the things that the folks that I talked to yesterday was a study by Morris Barer and Greg Stoddart. These folks did a study on improving access to needed medical services in rural or remote Canadian communities. They did a study in 1991 and they've redone this in 1999.

They say the worst thing we can do is nothing. They talk about a lot of different solutions that have been tried, including increasing medical school enrolment. What do they say about that? It won't work. Why? Because we have enough physicians, as I have already said, and with the increase in enrolment they'll likely continue the pattern of locating in urban centres.

They talk about financial incentives. They point out that financial incentives already exist. While they say financial incentives should not be dismissed, as a general strategy they have clearly not solved the problem. We have had this problem in other jurisdictions for many years, and they have not worked.

Recruitment of foreign doctors: We can recruit foreign doctors. We can open our doors and have more foreign doctors come in. But if they all just locate in the major centres, it won't solve the distribution problem.

They went on to consider many issues. They talked about a need for increased emphasis on educational initiatives, which I support. But I think that can be done in conjunction with managed billing numbers.

They did talk about the solution I am talking about today; that is, billing number allocations, managed billing numbers. What did they say? They said that a number of provinces have had or currently have these policies. Because these schemes have run into legal turbulence, none has ever been in place for a sufficient period to assess its effectiveness. Experience elsewhere suggests the administrative regulatory approaches can be effective in improving physician distribution.

Although they don't come out and support this, they do say that the nationally applied billing numbers option has the potential to be the most effective solution and the least costly. There is a case for it as an appropriate management mechanism to direct publicly financed physician resources to areas of public need.

I encourage the Ministry of Health, PAIRO and the OMA to continue their discussions. I await the McKendry report to see what is proposed in it. If we cannot solve the problem through these functions, then I urge the Ministry of Health to invoke managed billing numbers in Ontario.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I will be sharing my too-limited time with the member for Prince Edward-Hastings and, I believe, the member for St Catharines and I trust that I, too, will have an extra minute added to my time this morning. I wish there were more time to discuss an issue which is of tremendous concern to anybody who comes from an area that's underserved by physicians. I wish the government would bring forward some truly constructive suggestions so that we could begin to deal with this long-standing problem.

No one denies there is a problem with distribution of physicians. However, Mr Maves's resolution would make matters worse, not better. I am very strongly opposed to it.

There are two aspects to his resolution: The first is that if the government's current initiatives fail to correct the doctor distribution problem, we should move to billing numbers. Let me make it absolutely clear that this government's so-called initiatives to deal with the doctor distribution problem will fail for two very significant reasons.

One is because this government has failed to develop a truly workable plan not only to attract physicians into

underserved areas but also to retain physicians in underserved areas. We're very successful in our home areas at attracting people. We're not as successful in keeping them there, which is what we want to do. The models this government has put in place—in their first term they promised \$36.4 million over three years, almost none of which was used because the model that was developed couldn't possibly work.

It's not because there aren't models available. The Professional Association of Interns and Residents of Ontario has been working on this for six years and has put forward model after model, comprehensive plans to deal with both recruitment and retention. The government takes bits and pieces and doesn't even follow through on those, let alone put in place a comprehensive plan.

Proposals have come from northwestern Ontario, northeastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario. The important thing is that these proposals are not exactly the same. What the government fails to understand is that you have to deal with the needs of each community and each region a bit differently.

One of the communities I represent is the tiny town of Atikokan. They are facing a significant physician shortage. One of the reasons the government's group plan model won't work for them is that it's based on a minimum number of physicians. A minimum number of physicians in a small town like Atikokan isn't enough to give any family physician a reasonable quality of life. So the plan won't work and they have trouble attracting and retaining physicians in Atikokan. The primary need in Thunder Bay and other underserved communities is not the same plan we need in Atikokan. Until the government understands the importance of tailoring its plans to different areas, it's not going to be successful in dealing with the problem of doctor distribution.

1020

The second reason the plans of this government will fail is because they refuse to recognize that it's no longer just a distribution problem but a supply problem, and the supply problem, the shortage of physicians in this province, must be dealt with. It's time for the McKendry report to be tabled so we can get on with looking at how we solve the problems of shortage. As long as there is a shortage, the acute problems of distribution which communities in this province have been facing for many years is going to get even more critical.

We have put forward a number of suggestions for dealing with the shortage problem, including increased medical spaces and an increased number of residencies for foreign-trained physicians, both of which the government could act on tomorrow if it had the will.

One thing that we know for sure will not work is the other part of Mr Maves's resolution, where he talks about instituting a form of billing numbers. I can tell you, as somebody who comes from an underserved community, that we do not want physicians coming into our community who are coerced into being there and who are only going to be there for as long as it takes to fulfill any

commitment they have made. We want people to come to our communities because they are attracted to practise medicine there and because the support they get is sufficient to allow them to have a quality of life practising medicine in our communities.

We have already seen the impact of a limited billing number with the restriction on the amounts physicians can bill in overserved areas. The same Dr Chan, whom Mr Maves was quoting earlier, has made it quite clear in his report that the effect of that restricted billing approach was not to solve the problem of distribution. In fact, it made it worse because it simply drove physicians out of this province. He's hopeful that by ending the restrictive billing number we might be able to retain young physicians in our province, and that would certainly help both supply and distribution.

I urge this member, and I urge this government, to start to listen to the voices of people who have been dealing with the underserved issue for years: the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce, who are strongly opposed to this resolution; the Northeastern Ontario Medical Education Corp, which is strongly opposed to this resolution; the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance, which is strongly opposed to this resolution; and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, which is strongly opposed to this resolution.

Listen to the people who know what's needed when they say: "Do things that are positive. Do things like increasing the training, that's done in northern and southwestern Ontario, the most successful program to date in dealing with the distribution problem."

I trust this government will set aside this tired duck, which by the way has been found to be unconstitutional in other provinces. It will not fly. It should not fly. This government should be putting its energies into developing programs to deal with physician shortages and distribution problems that will actually work over the long term.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): It is my pleasure and honour today to rise in support of my colleague and friend Bart Maves, the member for Niagara Falls.

The member has initiated this resolution on a most pressing and important point. A family doctor is not just a number. My family has had a family doctor. When I get calls at my office—because Cambridge is underserved, like Niagara Falls, Oshawa, Barrie and many smaller communities in southern Ontario and northern communities—especially with children: How does one tell a constituent who phones with a sick child that she cannot obtain a family doctor in her vicinity? It's most difficult, and I have had a problem with it.

It's strange that one can live in a municipality and not really know it. I did not realize the extreme shortage of family doctors in our area until I was elected in June 1995. But shortly thereafter the calls started, and it troubled me. It troubled me to the extent that I took action, soon after I was elected, by applying for underserved status. It troubled me to the extent that I formed a task force in my municipality. It troubled me to the

extent that I started an initiative on a private bill to do away with the unequal distribution of family practitioners in our province.

I should say that in all my efforts, my good friend Bart Maves, the member for Niagara Falls, assisted and supported me throughout. Therefore, it is my pleasure at this time to speak to the public about this grave and serious problem for families not only in my riding but in many areas of the province.

Our government has proposed free tuition, and on July 23 Minister Witmer took one step closer to a possible solution by the appointment of Dr Robert McKendry, a fact-finding commissioner. I have faith in Minister Witmer's efforts and anxiously await her report and her plan.

The strange part about this problem is that everyone is in agreement that it is a severe problem, that we should do something about it, but there is not the will among all the stakeholders at this stage as to what we should do. Mr Maves has put forward a resolution which is strict but I think necessary. It is necessary to protect not only his constituents, the young families with children, but constituents throughout this province.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): This is certainly a topic that I have a strong interest in. We have a profound shortage of doctors in our area, and I wish it, like so many other things in life, could be solved with a very simple solution. But life doesn't work that way. In fact, the entire concept is kind of intriguing.

If we can say to doctors, "You must live here, and you must practise there," we can extend it to other things. I think perhaps in a way I saw a model of that with the legislation that said to squeegee people they can't be on the streets. We've now moved them somewhere, and perhaps we could take the homeless and the people who don't have the finances for food and say, "If you want to use the food bank, then you've got to live in this part of Ontario." So we could clean up the streets of Toronto by simply hiding the problem.

I certainly don't believe the simple solution of just forcing people out of an area and into another is the answer to it. There have been a lot of people who have put a lot of energy into this and have still not found the ideal solution. I would suggest that if we order someone to practise in a certain area, they still have the option of practising in the US, they have the option of practising in another province, and this resolution would worsen rather than help the situation. It doesn't reflect the fact that our physicians are humans and they have family situations. They may have parents that it's necessary to be close to. Their spouse or their partner may have a situation that requires them to be in a certain area. This is a very heavy-handed approach to a very complex problem.

The problem we're going to face is shortages. I'm a baby boomer. I know that my generation will be retiring. I know significant numbers of doctors in my age group who will be retiring. Unfortunately, at the same time as large numbers of doctors are retiring, we're seeing a need for increased medical services because of the aging

population. We need to address the doctor shortage. We don't need to simply try to artificially shuffle people around the province. We need to address the doctor shortage. There are approaches that I believe can be taken.

I was at a meeting of our public health board last week and was intrigued by their concept of prevention: The number of hours of medical care that are required each year for people who fall, if we could reduce those falls, if we could reduce those injuries by 20%, the tremendous reduction in medical care by doctors that would result from that. Money into prevention is, in fact, money into solving the physician shortage.

Nurse practitioners: We've paid lip service to them in this province, and we have as a province put money into their training, but we really don't want to pay them. There are so many services that could be provided in remote communities or there are services that could be provided in a doctor's office that could be delivered by these people if they could be funded for the service. Ironically, they require consultation with doctors, and this government is not prepared to pay the doctors for the time that they spend consulting with the nurse practitioners. There's a resource that needs to be used more.

1030

I believe savings could be accrued in physicians attracted if we went more to a one-stop approach. If we could have doctors and nurse practitioners and nurses and perhaps dentists and other health care providers in a cluster, it would certainly lessen the tremendous workload on doctors to cover after hours and to cover week-ends. I believe there's opportunity there to attract doctors to an area, not with a big stick but with good working conditions.

Many young doctors, if not all, when they leave university have substantial financial debts. I think we could provide incentives, again, to attract them to an area rather than force them to an area. They're coming out with tremendous debts and at the same time they're being required to spend a lot of upfront dollars to set up an office, which consists of a loan on top of a loan, to get operating. This government could work with them to attract them into an area by helping them get started up.

In rural communities, we also face the problem of travel time, and I believe we could provide some incentive to doctors to serve more than one area by paying them not just the travel costs but their time.

I believe there are solutions that are attainable, but I don't believe this big stick is a solution.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I'd like to begin by thanking the member for Niagara Falls for bringing this resolution for debate to the House today. I know for many members this is an important issue in their ridings, as many areas do not have enough doctors.

As a representative for the riding of Perth-Middlesex, I've spent a great deal of time, over the past four years particularly, trying to improve the health services available to my constituents. All too often in the past governments have avoided the issues surrounding health care in

small communities in Ontario. It is the small communities in Ontario that have suffered.

In my riding of Perth-Middlesex there is a desperate shortage of doctors, especially in the western part of the riding near Mitchell. I can remember at one point there were six doctors in this town. The number of doctors went to an alarming two before climbing to where it is today at four.

I know this fluctuation in medical practitioners is not uncommon in small communities throughout Ontario. As a government, we're committed to all communities having access to the medical care they need.

At present, there are close to 70 communities in Ontario that lack basic physician services. We've been listening to the Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario Medical Association and the association representing interns and residents, and we have acted on their recommendations to remedy the situation, but it is a complex problem.

The people of Perth-Middlesex see the need for effective and efficient health care services that are available when they need them. They know that I'll fight for those needs, and they know that I'll support the government initiatives such as the 70-hour sessional fee, the discounted payment policy, the re-entry training program, the globally funded contracts. There's more that needs to be done, and I think Mr Maves is on the right track with this resolution.

The health care needs of the people in the rural areas of the province are not the same as the needs of those in urban areas. The initiatives introduced by this government which I have just mentioned are the first steps toward addressing the difficulties faced in underserved communities.

As well, during the election we made a promise that, subject to community needs, our government will offer free tuition to students entering medical school or already studying medicine. If they're willing to relocate and practise in underserved areas on graduation, they have to commit to stay in that community for a minimum of five years. This should help, but it won't solve the whole problem.

I don't think it's unlike a situation where an engineer graduates from school and he goes to GM and GM says, "Yes, we absolutely need you, but we don't need you here in Oshawa, we want you in St Catharines," or Sainte Thérèse or at one of our plants somewhere else. In order to gain that employment, they go where their employer needs them. So I'm not averse to suggesting to our doctors that they should go where the need is.

I am ever so glad to see everyone in the House this morning, particularly Mr Bradley from the great riding of St Catharines, because he has been bringing to the attention of this House the shortage of ophthalmologists in the Niagara region. I would suggest there is not only a shortage of specialists, but of family doctors as well. We don't need an ophthalmologist in every store on every street in every town in Ontario, but we desperately need those medical services, both specialists and general, when we

need them. That is why I am proud to stand in the House this morning and support this resolution by the member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I am certainly pleased to join the debate with respect to the resolution from the member. We have to look at this situation as a very serious matter, and I think that's why the member who has brought this forward is on the right track. This is a very serious matter. The objective here is to get communities the physicians they need and deserve.

The ministry, as we know, has an underserved-area program. The issue that is being raised by this resolution is: "If the government's current initiatives fail to correct the doctor distribution problem throughout Ontario, then the government should proclaim sections of the Savings and Restructuring Act, 1996, allowing it to attach geographic areas to all new billing numbers issued by the Ministry of Health."

I only can relate it to the situation in my riding. I'm the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. I want to refer to an article that was in the Barrie Examiner this week. I'll read certain sections from it. It's entitled "Patients Face Long Waits at Hospital's Emergency Ward."

"And, as more and more people move into this burgeoning" area "bringing with them their growing health care needs, busy days are becoming the norm at RVH, which already has one of the busiest emergency departments in the province...."

"Adding to the pressure on RVH's emergency department is a severe shortage of family doctors in the Barrie area. The doctor crunch means many people without family physicians are relying on the emergency department and the city's after-hour clinics for non-urgent medical care."

"We see a large number of people who don't have family doctors.... It's very difficult for patients. We have people moving into the area to find, not only do they not have a choice in terms of location or gender, they may not have the opportunity to get a doctor, period."

"So, many end up in emergency and after-hour clinics."

"At the moment, none of Barrie's approximately 70 family doctors is accepting new patients. Counting specialists, the city has about 200 doctors at present...."

"Provincial health care statistics show Barrie has 1,259 patients for every non-specialist. That compares to a ratio of 824 to 1 in Toronto."

"Unlike the situation in Toronto, where an outbreak of flu virus has been straining hospital emergency departments, Barrie can't blame the flu for a spike in emergency visits."

"It's purely volume—the impact of population growth—that's pushing up the numbers.... Patient volume is up 10% in every department in the hospital."

I think it's high time that we address this very serious matter. I certainly join the member with respect to this resolution. I think we have to get communities the physicians they need and deserve. I look forward to the vote on this matter.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Indeed, one of the very significant health care problems that we face in St Catharines and in the Niagara Peninsula is that of a shortage of family physicians. What we have to recognize, as well, are some other special circumstances, and that is, by and large, that the physicians who are in Niagara are older in age than the physicians in many areas of the province. Therefore, we can anticipate that there will be some significant numbers of individuals retiring from the medical profession in the relatively near future. This problem has been brewing for some period of time, and those of us who have constituency offices—that is, all members of this Legislature—recognize that there are people phoning in desperation, trying to secure the services of a family physician.

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We've had physicians who have passed away, that is, practising physicians, and those who have simply retired or moved elsewhere. The problem that we are encountering is that we're not having a sufficient number of physicians coming in to replace those. Certainly the Niagara District Health Council and individual communities, along with the Ontario government, have endeavoured to deal with this problem, but at this point I think it's close to 100 physicians who are really needed for the entire Niagara Peninsula.

I can tell you as well that there's a problem with specialists. I have raised in this House on a number of occasions the problem we have with ophthalmologists. Again because our area of the province has, on a per capita basis, the largest number of people who are senior citizens, we therefore have people who are bound to encounter the health care system more. Some of the parts of our body that deteriorate as we get older are the eyes, the ears and others, but certainly the eyes, and we have a situation where we have a shortage of ophthalmologists. We're supposed to have, even under the rules of the provincial government's Ministry of Health, 14 ophthalmologists. We have only 13 at this time, and a number of those may be people who are not practising on a full-time basis. The provincial government's answer to this was simply to lump us in with Hamilton. Hamilton has 20 ophthalmologists. I'm informed by people who represent Hamilton that not all of those people are practising on a full-time basis and indeed their offices are backed up. So if you want an appointment with an ophthalmologist in our part of the province, it's going to be at least two months, probably four or six months, if we're not talking about an emergency.

Clearly, we have a problem that can be solved at this time only by lifting the billing cap for ophthalmologists in our part of the province. Is it necessarily the ideal solution? Well, there aren't many ideal solutions in this world. An ideal solution would be to have more ophthalmologists. We don't; we're an underserved area.

Similarly, with family physicians—and indeed I could say a few other areas where we have specialists—we have the same situation. Again, with the large number of seniors, we have people who need knee replacements, hip

replacements and other work done to their body, which happens when all of us tend to get older. Billing caps there force those individuals into unacceptably long waiting times.

The member has come up with one suggestion on how this may be fixed. I believe there should be a lot of incentives out there for individuals to come to areas such as Niagara. I would like to see more of the actual teaching and training taking place in areas such as the Niagara Peninsula. The city of St Catharines, if I can be parochial, would be a reasonable place for that.

Raising this issue in the House is a good idea. It has to be addressed, and those of us who represent medically underserved areas are going to be concerned that we have a program which attracts physicians of all kinds to our area. I think it's going to require an investment of money. If the government is going to be busy cutting taxes and cutting various ministries, it's not going to have the money to deal with a health care crisis in this province. What the people in my area want to see is their funds, their tax dollars, invested in a top-notch health care system.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): It's my pleasure to be able to speak to this resolution this morning. Let me first of all say that I agree with the member for St Catharines and others that this is an important issue to have before the House today. It is, as we all know, a long-standing problem in many of our communities across Ontario. I recognize that members of all parties over various times have tried to deal with this very vexing problem.

I'm an MPP in Toronto, and it's not a problem there. Indeed, as people know, one of the problems is that many physicians choose to stay in Toronto and other large urban areas. So I certainly don't speak from experience myself or my constituents'. I must say that my birthplace—my hometown is in Newfoundland-Labrador, from where I just returned, in fact, because my father is ill. I can tell you, as you can well imagine, that it continues to be a major problem, as here in Ontario, particularly in Labrador and rural Labrador—of course it's all rural in Labrador—to attract not only physicians but nurses. In fact there was a press conference when I was there held by the nurses, talking about this very same issue: what kinds of incentives to bring forward to keep nurses and doctors in very remote areas, as in Labrador and parts of Newfoundland. Of course, having been a member of the NDP government, I remember very well sitting around the cabinet table trying to grapple with this indeed very disturbing and difficult problem.

I'm not going to support the bill today, and I don't think anybody should.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): The resolution.

Ms Churley: The resolution. Thank you for clarifying that, member for Dufferin-Peel. I'm not going to support the resolution before us today because it is indeed a really draconian measure and, as has been pointed out by previous speakers, has already been ruled unconstitu-

tional in other provinces where it has been tried. It is a measure that perhaps one day as a last resort, after trying all kinds of solutions that have been suggested and which so far this government, as indicated in many letters that my colleague, our health critic, Ms Frances Lankin, has received since the medical community became aware that this resolution was going to be debated today—they point out that they have indeed tried to get the minister to adopt some of the measures they're recommending and can't get her to do that.

I want to read you some examples from the letters that we have received and that I know Mr Maves has received as well from many groups and associations from the medical community in Ontario. As you will see from some of the excerpts I read from these letters, there is a real concern out there about this draconian measure that's been brought before us today.

I'm going to read to you, for instance, some excerpts from a letter from Dr Jeffrey Remington, which was copied to me and Frances Lankin. It was written directly to Mr Maves in response to this bill. He is the chair of the Niagara Physician Resource Planning Task Force. What he says is this:

"Dear Mr Maves:

"I am writing to you to with strong disapproval for your plan to begin attaching geographic billing number restrictions to new medical graduates. As you are aware, I am the chair of the Niagara Physician Resource Planning Task Force, a committee of the Niagara District Health Council. For almost two years, this group has extensively researched both the crisis in physician manpower, as well as potential solutions. I know first-hand the lack of primary care doctors in your riding, as well as the entire Niagara Peninsula.

"Our group has offered several solutions to the doctor shortage that could be effectively and promptly implemented both in our region and in other areas of the province. They include:

"—the hiring of additional community development officers for central, south and west planning regions

"—funding for medical students and residents to complete parts of their training in our region

"—pre-medical programs to encourage students from outside of the tertiary centres to enter medical training with the goal that they would be more likely to return there to practise (eg, medical experience plus program at Brock University)."

And this is something that our party indeed has been pushing, that is:

"—additional funding for nurse practitioners to work in group practices in rural and underserved communities."

Let me add there that when we were in government, we, as everybody knows, enhanced and started a funding program to increase the number of nurse practitioners and their responsibilities and abilities to carry out certain practices. We know that there are nurse practitioners—there are some in my riding—who cannot get jobs, which is a real shame. It's been recommended time and time again that there be more community health centres in

that there be more community health centres in rural areas and the role of nurse practitioners be increased greatly.

He also recommends:

"—increasing the enrolment of Ontario's medical schools combined with specific changes in family medicine resident training programs to increase the proportion of family doctors graduating and to ensure they have the training and skills to meet the challenges of practice in non-urban centres."

His last recommendation here is:

"—address the issue of foreign-trained medical graduates, many of whom are native Ontarians, and facilitate some sort of training/certification programs for them."

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He goes on to say, "Unfortunately, when we have attempted these ideas with Ministry of Health officials they have not been met with approval.

"We strongly agreed with the Minister of Health's decision to appoint a fact-finder on this issue." May I point out that this government's own health minister has appointed a fact-finder on this issue and these people have participated in what he says was a very successful three-hour meeting.

"It is most discouraging and detrimental to this process"—that is ongoing right now; those are my words—"that you chose not to wait for his report, but to immediately jump to extremely coercive measures to solve this problem.

"Mr Maves, you are no doubt aware that one of the strongest reasons that your riding is underserved for physicians is that in the last decade a great number chose to move to the United States. ... If you and your government choose to implement coercive measures to redistribute family physicians around this province, I absolutely believe that we will be faced with the largest 'brain drain' of young medical talent the province has ever seen."

What Dr Remington is suggesting here—he's urging the health minister and the cabinet to withdraw this idea immediately. Now, I recognize that this is a private member's bill and it is up to each individual member to vote on this today, but I would agree with Dr Remington. This bill should be voted down today. There are all kinds of other measures that have been suggested in the letter I just read and I have many more communiqués from various others from the medical field who express the same kinds of concerns I expressed today.

There is a letter here, for instance—I believe all MPPs received it—from the Professional Association of Internes and Residents of Ontario. They say they're writing to ask our party, and indeed I'm sure all of the other MPPs, to reject this resolution on the following grounds:

"(1) PAIRO has worked for the past six years with close to 200 northern and rural communities and virtually all these communities have told us that they 'prefer to have doctors who want to come and stay over doctors who are forced to come.'"

His second point: Again we hear that another group "has recommended a broad range of non-coercive solutions to the Ministry of Health," and "these recommendations are included in several reports" which are available to all of us. He says, "While a few of these recommendations have been put in place, primarily in northern Ontario, many more significant measures recommended ... have not been implemented. (Some of the possible solutions identified include increasing the number of students admitted to medical school, increasing the number of international medical graduates admitted to the IMGs training system, voluntary return of service with financial incentives such as loan repayment, training more physicians in rural areas and substantially expanding training programs in rural areas, extending and implementing alternate payment plans so doctors can work on contract rather than on fee for service, setting up a regionalized quick response system for replacement doctors (locums), providing quality of life incentives to avoid physician burnout, recognition of spousal and family needs, implementing funded group clinic facilities, and restructuring of the underserved area program.

"(3) The McKendry report (on physician shortages)"—and let me bring this up again—"commissioned by the Ministry of Health, is due shortly. This report and the recommendations it will propose must be given sufficient time for implementation before contemplating the sort of resolution proposed by Mr. Maves. In the meantime, PAIRO continues to work with underserved and rural communities to help alleviate shortages in the short term."

He goes on to say the same thing as other correspondents have said, that this is a draconian measure and will in fact have the opposite effect. I know that Mr. Maves is bringing this resolution forward in good faith, but when you get this kind of information from those in the medical community, who say, "This will not work; it will have the opposite effect, that in fact we will lose more physicians," just think about it.

We know there are more and more women entering the medical profession. There are more female doctors out there, who have children, who have spouses, who have family needs. We have situations and legal decisions that back up what I'm saying here. When you have a couple with children living in one area and that person is restricted from practising that profession, then it means it's a fundamental affront to their human rights, their constitutional rights, that they would not be able to get work or their spouse—and this applies whether it's male or female—would have to pick up and leave or not be able to work in that community.

So we have two reasons why we shouldn't support this resolution today. Number one, in many ways the most compelling, is that this government right now has a fact-finding commission out there which is going to make recommendations to the minister shortly. Why in the world would this resolution be brought forward today when that report is imminent? We don't know as yet how the minister is going to respond to it, but what we should

hope for is that they will move really aggressively, which indeed may mean spending extra funds. The worry we have here today, of course, with even more cuts coming, which we all know about, is that in fact there is going to be less money to be able to deal with the kinds of incentives and measures that are recommended by those who are in the field and know what needs to be done and know that there are solutions to this. I fear that the government may reject some of these solutions, but at least wait until we try all of those other measures before we get into a mess, that—and this is the second reason we should reject it today—it has already proved to be unconstitutional in other provinces.

Here we have a government that's in the process of having recommendations from the medical community to be delivered to them, and secondly, we know—the evidence is in front of us; I have copies of some of the court decisions here—that it has already proven to be unconstitutional. Why waste the time of the Legislature debating something and perhaps passing something that indeed, at the end of day, if it is implemented by this government, will mean (1) that it's draconian, (2) will not work for the various reasons I've outlined, and (3) should the government still choose to go ahead with this, we clearly know that it is already unconstitutional and will just lead to expensive, messy court challenges. I will not be supporting this today.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I am pleased to rise today to support the resolution put forward by the member for Niagara Falls with respect to our distribution problem of physicians in Ontario.

When I was first elected, I worked on this issue with the towns of Tilsonburg and Port Rowan, and very simply, there were just too many people for the number of doctors in those areas. We were successful in getting Port Rowan designated as an underserved area very early on. Subsequently, all the other municipalities across Haldimand-Norfolk have been designated. However, the designation does not seem to be a magic bullet and it does not guarantee a new doctor anywhere in Ontario.

The member for Niagara Falls presented some statistics. In 1997, the University of Toronto did a report on physician distribution. Clearly, the results are a wake-up call. Their findings indicate that almost 90% of the inhabitants of underserved areas are in southern Ontario. This U of T report hit home in my riding. The Haldimand-Norfolk region was deemed the second most underserved area in Ontario, behind only the Sudbury district. Local people did not need a study to tell them there weren't enough doctors in their area. The problem has become quite apparent in the town of Simcoe in the past year. In consultation with the Ministry of Health, I requested that caps be lifted on physicians' remuneration as a short-term measure.

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However, throwing money at the problem does not solve the problem and we need a long-term solution, the kind of solution we are seeing here today from the member for Niagara Falls. I've been very encouraged by a

number of pilot projects, for example in Paris, Hamilton and other areas, to roster doctors in co-operative groups to take care of patients. This is one very creative approach to the solution. But the heart of the problem that the member for Niagara Falls is trying to remedy with today's resolution is that the doctor distribution system and problem needs to be addressed very soon.

Our government has been working with the Ontario Medical Association for over four years to solve this problem. We have to ask ourselves: How much closer are we to solving the problem now? I have confidence in the Blueprint plan to offer free tuition to medical students. Again, that's going to help a bit in remote areas like Kapuskasing and Port Rowan, as I have mentioned.

Our member, in the resolution today, has suggested that all other avenues are failing. We should stop giving new OHIP billing numbers to overserviced areas. Some may think this is drastic, but the member—and I agree with him—believes that we need a plan B because plan A is not working.

Mr Maves: I want to thank all my colleagues in the Legislature for their input on this debate. It's a complex problem. I know that, and we've been trying to solve this in Ontario for many, many years. In 1996 we had this debate when we passed Bill 26. The OMA, PAIRO and others said: "Don't enact it. We'll work with you to solve the distribution problems." Four years later, the problem is worse—not necessarily for lack of effort, but the problem is worse and our constituents are still having this problem to greater and greater degrees.

Again, it's not a problem of supply. I talked about Ben Chan's study, which said it's not a problem of supply. The OMA has recognized it; the Ministry of Health has recognized it. Again, the report that was given to me by Barer-Stoddart recognizes it. They say:

"History does not support a supply expansion policy. For over 30 years, prior to the early 1990s, annual increases in the supply of physicians exceeded growth in the Canadian population. Since then, it has kept pace.... Therefore, it is discouraging that the problem of rural and remote access ... appears to be worse now than ever before."

We concur, and I think the citizens of Ontario concur. Today's debate shows that we indeed needed to renew this discussion. Barer-Stoddart also says, "Our intent is to stimulate discussion and further considerations, because it seems clear that real progress will require real change."

Folks, I support increased remote medical training initiatives. I support the use of nurse case practitioners. I support improvement initiatives. I support seeing the McKendry study. That was in my resolution before the desk edited it out, quite frankly. But we need to get something done and we need to get something soon. I hope you will support the resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member's time has expired. This ballot item will be dealt with at 12 o'clock.

HIGHWAY 17

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Harris government should keep its electoral promise to the people of Renfrew county to improve the safety of Highway 17 by immediately four-laning Highway 17 to the town of Arnprior and by immediately committing to a timetable for the four-laning of Highway 17 to the town of Renfrew.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member has moved ballot item number 4.

Mr Conway: I rise today to address a matter of urgent public concern to the people I represent in rural eastern Ontario, the Ottawa Valley. I do so recognizing that I'm not alone in this concern. I'm pleased to see my colleague the newly elected member from Carleton-Gloucester here today, someone who knows the Ottawa Valley well and who asked a related question to the Minister of Transportation the other day.

To give you some indication of how serious this matter is for my constituents, almost the very moment that my friend and colleague from Carleton-Gloucester was asking the Minister of Transportation his question about Highway 17 in this Legislature but 48 hours ago, the 22nd person was being killed on that highway in the last 12 months.

Highway 17 through the Ottawa Valley is, tragically, a killing field for my constituents, and for other people who must of necessity, for work or recreation, travel that very important artery through the Ottawa Valley.

Let me repeat to this House: 22 people have been killed on Highway 17 in the Ottawa Valley in the last 12 months. That is a carnage that is absolutely unacceptable. It is a carnage that is deeply troubling to the people I represent and, I know, to the people who are represented by my friend from Orleans and by the Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs. You cannot read the Pembroke paper, the Arnprior paper, the Ottawa Citizen or the Ottawa Sun without understanding the palpable anxiety and anger that attaches to the fact that after years and decades of promises from provincial governments of all stripes, we still see a highway, particularly between Kanata and Arnprior, that is not four-laned.

Yes, there have been improvements, and I want to congratulate whatever government, whether it was the Peterson government or the Rae government or the now Harris government for the work that's been done. It was said here the other day, appropriately, that we've just opened nine more kilometres of four-laning east of Arnprior. But that's well short of the timetable that was promised years ago.

There is more than just the carnage. There are increased volumes, particularly because of the economic activity that's developing, not just in the Ottawa Valley but in Kanata, the so-called Silicon Valley North.

More and more of the constituents I represent in communities like Renfrew and Arnprior are driving daily into Kanata and West Carleton to work. People from the

Upper Ottawa Valley, and places like Barry's Bay, Rolphton, Palmer Rapids and Petawawa drive routinely to the major health care facilities in the national capital area, and they do that often during very bad winter conditions. This highway is truly a matter of urgent public concern to everyone in eastern Ontario, most especially for my constituents.

We had an electoral campaign just a few short months ago. It is no surprise that in that electoral campaign, whether my esteemed Conservative opponent, Mr Jordan, or a very good New Democratic opponent, Mr Boyer, or I were in Arnprior or Renfrew or Pembroke or Petawawa, one of the issues that dominated the debate was: "What will you do as a potentially re-elected or elected member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to add pressure to bring about those badly needed improvements to this highway?" All of us sang from the same hymn book, because you could not, as a democrat, do anything else. We all heard the same cries of anguish from the parents and the loved ones of those 22 people and countless others who have met either a tragic death or a serious accident on that highway.

I will not soon forget the day—it was a very rainy day—Tuesday, June 1, 1999, when I, Mr Sterling, Mr Jordan, the mayors of Renfrew and Arnprior, the warden of Renfrew county and the candidates from West Carleton gathered in the pouring rain at the intersection of 17 and old 29, just east of Arnprior, to await the arrival of the then-Minister of Transportation, now the Minister of the Environment. On the eve of polling day, Mr Clement said—and I won't quote the papers, but I could—"Re-elect us and we will move on a priority basis to get the four-lane to Arnprior and move forward with the planning to Renfrew." We all applauded.

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Two days later, the election took place. Conway was re-elected, and the Harris government was re-elected. But the people of the Ottawa Valley heard us all. They expect that the urgency and priority we all offered on that solemn, if wet, pre-election day would be met and discharged in this mandate.

Many of us are troubled that since June 3 we have our friend Mr Turnbull, the now-Minister of Transportation, writing to constituents. I'm not going to quote chapter and verse, but I have in my hand a letter signed by the Minister of Transportation to a resident of eastern Ontario who has specifically written to the minister in the past few weeks wondering what the plans were for keeping the promise on four-laning Highway 17 to Arnprior. What was the answer? The answer is—and let me quote part of the letter—"Although I am unable to commit the ministry to a specific schedule at this time...."

We need specificity. My constituents don't expect miracles, but they expect the promise to be kept, and on a timely basis. Yes, the minister said the other day to our friend from Orleans, Mr Coburn, "We will keep the promise," but there was no timetable. There was no commitment to when and where. As I say, we don't

expect miracles, but we do expect the government to recognize the urgency and the priority.

Mr Speaker, on behalf of my constituents I want to tell you that we expect more clarity, more definition to the minister's so-called commitment. Precisely when do you propose to have the four-laning to Arnprior? Precisely when do you propose to have the four-laning to the town of Renfrew?

Some people would say, "There's a resource or a money problem." I understand that. As a long-time member of this assembly and as a former minister of the crown, I understand that there are always more demands than there are dollars. But let me cite a couple of data that are highly relevant.

In eastern Ontario in the last four years, Her Majesty's provincial government, led by my colleague from Nipissing, Mr Harris, has downloaded precisely 50% of the provincial highway network in eastern Ontario. We have in eastern Ontario today a provincial highway system that is only half as large as it was only five years ago. At the same time, we have over \$2 billion worth of annual gasoline tax revenues. Let me add that, according to the Canadian Automobile Association, a very esteemed group that monitors these matters, the Ontario government is at best these days spending only 40% of the dollars collected through the gasoline tax for highway capital purposes. I understand that the government of Canada spends—

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Mr Speaker, I want some order.

I understand, as my friend from Kitchener opines, that the federal government spends even less. I ran on June 3, not for the federal Parliament; I ran to come here to give an accounting of the stewardship and of the tax dollars provided to the provincial government.

Let me repeat: In the last few years, the Ontario government has downloaded 50% of the provincial highway system in eastern Ontario. At the same time, we have continued to collect in excess of \$2 billion annually in gasoline taxes alone. According to the Canadian Automobile Association, we are committing at best only 40% of those gasoline tax revenues for highway capital and maintenance. That is not good enough and it is not fair to the rural people of the Ottawa Valley and elsewhere. If we are going to be taking more and more of gasoline taxes to fund general government programs, let me tell you, that is not only unfair to the department of transportation, to the travelling public and to the motorists of this province, but it is a cruel tax on rural people, who by and large have no public transit and must depend on the car and the half-ton truck. We should not be using the gasoline tax for general government programs.

I take my seat by concluding that this is a matter of urgent public concern, and my constituents want and expect a much clearer, much more specific timetable as to when this Highway 17 will be four-laned to Renfrew and to Arnprior.

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this motion by the

member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. In particular I want to speak with respect to commitments. This government has, I believe, an enviable track record in terms of meeting its commitments. In 1995, when this government was elected, they had a plan they followed, the Common Sense Revolution. It was an action plan which they were committed to and followed through on. From 1995 to 1998, we cut taxes 69 times, including a 30% cut in income taxes. We pledged to create more jobs, and in fact a record 540,000 new jobs were created in under four years. We pledged to reduce the number of Ontarians on welfare, and as a result, Ontario has gone from the highest number of people per capita on welfare to the lowest in Canada. Back in 1995, the Mike Harris government pledged to complete Highway 416 before the end of the millennium. Not only was the highway built on time; it was also under budget.

Transportation Minister Turnbull reconfirmed the government's commitment in the House just two days ago with respect to the expansion of Highway 17 to four lanes through to Arnprior. This government has proven its ability to fulfill its commitments, with the construction of Highway 416 in eastern Ontario, a highway that had been talked about for years and years. Promises were made, promises weren't kept until 1995. Now, a promise made is a promise kept.

We've also introduced the action plan for safer roads. In fact, before the Mike Harris government was elected it was estimated with respect to Highway 416, the 80-kilometre stretch, that it would take 10 years to complete. Instead the highway was completed before the year 2000 and under budget by \$14 million. It was unveiled to the people of Ontario in September of this year in a lasting tribute to the veterans, as it was named the Veterans Memorial Highway.

In order to truly appreciate the commitments kept by this government, it's important to recognize the following facts: This year alone, the federal government will remove in excess of \$2 billion in gasoline taxes from Ontario. Last year, they removed \$2 billion in gasoline taxes from this province and reinvested a paltry \$20 million. Last year, 1998-99, this government spent \$151 million on capital construction and rehabilitation of eastern Ontario highways. The most the provincial Liberals spent was \$43 million, in 1989-90. This year, 1999-2000, it is the highest capital construction and rehabilitation budget in Ontario's history, almost \$700 million invested in construction and rehabilitation of Ontario's highways, which had been left in a state of neglect during the latter 1980s and early 1990s—twice what the Liberals spent, \$342 million, in 1989-90.

But simply widening Highway 417 will not guarantee increased highway safety, and for that reason Minister Turnbull outlined a comprehensive action plan with respect to safer roads in Ontario. Some of the highlights of this action plan are increased enforcement by the Ontario Provincial Police and Ministry of Transportation, in which police will crack down on aggressive driving and rigorously enforce speed limits and other highway

traffic legislation; in addition to that, the promotion of safer driving habits through public education, an intensive and long-term public education campaign designed to cut down on aggressive driving, speeding, following too closely, improper lane changes, and of course road rage.

We've also established an Ontario Advisory Group on Safe Driving. This incorporates input from a wide range of key stakeholder groups across the province who are interested in road use and highway safety. This group will meet regularly to advise the Minister of Transportation on better and safer driving habits and how to improve the rules of the road, and the minister will rely on them as a valuable resource and respected sounding board on which to implement new policies that will provide safer roads for Ontarians.

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We mustn't overlook the fact of long-term infrastructure planning as well, to ensure that future development will meet rigorous safety and traffic requirements. To ensure that Ontario's transportation infrastructure and capital investment decisions continue to be based on solid research and knowledge, this long-term strategic plan will focus on such key transportation issues as road safety, free flow of goods and services on our highway system, and enhanced gateways and trade corridors that we need to keep Ontario's economy strong.

I'd like to point out and commend a volunteer group in Arnprior known as the Safe on 17 group. The spokesperson for that group, Mr Sean Allen, also recognized the importance of improving driver education and safe operating practices on our highways and recognized that driver error does play a large part in some of the collisions that we have on our highways.

I don't think anyone in this House would not support an initiative to improve safety on our highways. When a person loses their life on our highways, it is indeed a sad and tragic situation, on any one of our highways, including the stretch up the Ottawa Valley. That's why this action plan will play an important role in how we build and construct our highways and change our rules on how vehicles should operate on those public highways in the future.

In conclusion, this government does honour its commitments. It was a priority of this government to finish Highway 416 on time and under budget: job done ahead of time; check it off. It is a priority of this government to ensure all Ontarians have safer roads to use throughout the province: The action plan and advisory group is another commitment kept. It is the priority of this government to widen Highway 17 to four lanes to Arnprior and initiate the process for extension to Renfrew, and with a great deal of confidence, I say this will be another commitment kept by this government.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I stand here in my place to fully support the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. He understands that in rural Ontario and in northern Ontario highways are our lifeline. In Algoma-Manitoulin, the air service that we

once could count on exists no more in many of our communities.

Highway 17: Sometimes I think that maybe I am the member for Highway 17 rather than the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. Roughly 500 miles of Highway 17 is within the constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin, from Nairn Centre to the Hemlo gold fields. It is huge. It is one of the lifelines that we find most important. It would be inconceivable to not have highway improvements on 17 done today. I look in the constituency, and while we have had some rehabilitation work done on the highway, we are still experiencing huge stretches of 17 that need dramatic work.

I want to tell you that I, like the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, know that there's \$2 billion of government revenue that is not being spent on our highways. That is a strange state of affairs. Merely nine years ago, almost exactly the same amount of money that was brought in from fuel taxes, licence fees etc were spent on our roads—just nine years ago. What's happened? What has happened is that two successive governments have decided that this is a great source of revenue, that people won't notice. The people don't seem to understand that we're not using it for roads any more. It used to be called the road tax. When you went to your local service station and he submitted the tax claims to the province, it was called road tax. We no longer, apparently, call it a road tax because it doesn't go to the roads, or at least a very small proportion, about 40% of it, I guess.

We have the money in this province to invest in our infrastructure. In our area, we have to have it. I've noticed that, as governments do, they announce lots of highway projects just prior to elections. We expected, on the word of the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, that we would have Highway 6 from Espanola to Little Current done. I don't see much action. Maybe in the fullness of time, as they say. And there are other significant road improvements that need to be made, but no, Mr Eves and Mr Harris are using that \$2 billion to finance some of their follies.

I want to tell the Minister of Transportation that this afternoon, when Minister Hodgson releases his savings, his \$1 billion in cuts that he's going to take out, we are going to have a very close look at his capital budget, because we believe there will be less money spent on roads. We believe that the capital expenditures that this government had pledged will not take place, at least not within the time frame of the next year or two. We will probably see a group of announcements in about 2003 and an increase in capital spending about that time so we can look at those nice blue "Your Ontario Tax Dollars At Work" signs again.

But this afternoon, as we watch the Chair of Management Board enumerate the cuts, the minister of pleasantville, the Minister of Transportation, should know that we expect to see capital funding more than maintained, increased, and the projects on Highway 17, Highway 6 and others brought to the forefront and accomplished in a very certain time.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'm certainly glad to be here today to listen to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. The member has presented a very good resolution in terms of what he sees as the interests of his constituents. Having worked in eastern Ontario a few years back, in Smiths Falls, in education, there is no doubt that back in those days 417 and a lot of the network of highways in eastern Ontario certainly needed improvement. If you look back through the years, I guess if you used a Richter scale or bar charts of overall road conditions, it would be interesting to see how things have evolved from those days up till 1999.

I'll go back to the history in a short time, but I wanted to review for the edification of this House what the government has already achieved in terms of improving road infrastructure in eastern Ontario. I'm glad that the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke noted that this has to be done, in terms of road expansion, rehabilitation, infrastructure improvement, within the competing resources of an overall budget that is set out by cabinet and the respective professional management people in the various ministries.

1130

It seems to me that when you look at the recent history of what has gone on in terms of road expansion improvement and rehabilitation in eastern Ontario, we in this government have done a pretty good job in terms of prudently balancing our expenditures with what we see as the need for infrastructure improvement, whether they be ongoing maintenance, upgrades, rehabilitation or expansion. We want to ensure that future generations have a safe road network throughout Ontario and also ensure that we recognize economic competitiveness.

The member for Carleton-Gloucester has pointed out that we have made our commitment and lived up to it on the expansion, improvement and completion of Highway 416. Now we're working on Highway 417. It's only recently that we had another nine kilometres committed to success, and that is the promise of the four-lane Highway 417 from regional road 49 west to Panmure Road, which was an \$11-million contract. It's completed; it's open. At the current time there's ongoing engineering construction and design going on, as well as environmental approvals. Let me remind the House that the design for the four-lane alignment for Highway 17 from regional road 20 to regional road 22 is currently under way, including the Mississippi bridge design. Property acquisition for the right-of-way is also in progress. Indeed, we're also commencing the preliminary design studies on the four-laning of the highway from Arnprior to Renfrew.

The question is, are we keeping the promise? Yes, we are keeping the promise.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): No you're not.

Mr Hastings: Well, if we aren't, then I guess the member for Kingston and the Islands hasn't been up to see what has been going on in eastern Ontario in the last few years. Since the member is so informed on this, I'd

like to remind him—and it would be nice to see, when we vote on this particular resolution, and I'm sure his colleague from Pembroke would be interested in seeing, how we can explore with the federal government perhaps a renewal of the COIW program, the Canada-Ontario infrastructure works program that was done 1994-95. That is a way of looking at building on your road success in terms of what was accomplished then.

Going back to the history of this whole expansion of our roads network across this country, let me remind you that it was the Diefenbaker government back in 1959-60 that committed to a roads-to-resources policy, not just across the middle of Canada but in the far north. The author of that design, that vision, was the Honourable Alvin Hamilton. It resulted in the development of the Trans-Canada Highway across this great country.

In the current middle years, we haven't seen from federal governments, whatever their political stripe, the need and the necessity to renew our infrastructure in that particular regard. I may not be correct in my recall, but I believe Highway 417 through the valley formed an original part of that whole network from British Columbia to Newfoundland. We've noticed in the last few years that Minister Collenette has made frequent announcements, before he went to cabinet, that he was going to get us billions of dollars for public transit and highway improvement infrastructure. About a year ago, when I was in northwestern Ontario, I had the opportunity to speak with several of the media at that point, when it was pointed out that we had made major investments, major expenditures, to the highway system and particularly the bridge network in northwestern Ontario. If you look at today's expenditure, nearly \$700 million has been put into expansion, maintenance and rehabilitation of the road system across this province.

If Minister Collenette at the time was serious about trying to get a few more dollars for our national infrastructure, when you combine it with the whole NAFTA-highway thing that the federal Liberals are certainly very recently converted to, then perhaps we need to look at the possibility with the member opposite of developing that strategy further and seeing whether, when he talks about the immediacy, the urgent priority of completing and widening Highway 417 from Arnprior to Renfrew, we could work with the federal government in this regard.

If we're looking at an improved infrastructure—the widening of the highway is not only for safety reasons but also for economic development—then this is a particular strategy that I think we can work on together. I would commend the member to remark on this joint necessity.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I rise to support my colleague in urging the government to move quickly on the four-laning of this highway.

I would take up the point that the previous speaker just made and that is that, among other reasons, clearly there are economic reasons. I continue to remind ourselves that, as I think most members here know, Ontario now is perhaps the area in the world that relies the most on

exports for its economy. The most important page in the budget for me was where the province acknowledged and pointed out that 10 years ago roughly 25% of Ontario's economy was exports; today it's 50%. We've gone from about a quarter of our GDP, gross domestic product, being exports to half of it now being exports. There's nothing in our economy that's more important than our trade, particularly with the US.

So one key reason is economic, that all areas of this province have to be assured that they're going to share in the economic opportunities of trade, particularly with the US, and for that reason it's important that we move quickly.

I would say that the funding of this is a matter of extreme concern. If you look at the budget documents, firstly, the Ministry of Transportation capital budget has gone down dramatically. Next year, the government tells us, it plans to cut its capital expenditures by about 40%. That was in the budget. They said that in the fiscal year we're in right now, 1999-2000, they plan to spend roughly \$2.7 billion on capital and then next year they plan to reduce that to about \$1.7 billion. They're going to reduce capital expenditures in Ontario by 40%. That's what they say.

I might add that the government itself has told us that in the province we should be spending about \$4 billion each and every year on capital refurbishment for our infrastructure. How is the government going to do that? Historically, if you look at the capital budget for the province of Ontario, we have tended to spend roughly \$4 billion. The Harris government has said, "No, we're going to cut that from \$4 billion to \$2 billion, on average, over the next five years and we're going to get \$10 billion from the private sector." That's the plan for building roads. They're going to get half of the money from the private sector.

I say to the people of Ontario, the private sector is in the business of making money. That's why they're there. To think that the private sector is simply going to, out of the goodness of its heart, build these roads is naive at best. If we are banking on the future of our highway system being funded by the private sector, and that's what the government's told us, we're in for nothing but toll roads. In particular, I say the 407 users have really been sold down the road. The government doubled the price of the 407, sold the road for 99 years and told the purchaser, "Listen, you can take the tolls up every single year for inflation plus 2%." It's a licence to print money for the purchaser of the 407. For the government, pre-election, Harris got an extra \$1.6 billion, but for the poor users of the 407, for 99 years you're going to be paying off that nice little pre-election goody of Mike Harris.

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The reason I raise this is, we already know what the government plans to do. They're going to cut capital expenditures in half. They used to spend \$4 billion; they're going to cut it to \$2 billion. They say, "We're going to go to the private sector and somehow or other

they will magically give us \$2 billion a year." It's not going to happen.

What is extremely important to the future of Ontario is clearly our infrastructure. Our trade with the US is clearly important. A key element of that is our highway system. Yet we already know the government plans to cut capital from what we used to spend, from \$4 billion to \$2 billion, and somehow or other thinks that miraculously we're going to find the money from the private sector. The only way it will come is by user-pay. Those who happen to live in a part of the province where the road has already been built should say, "Thank you very much." But those in the areas that need their roads refurbished or need new roads should say: "My goodness, the future doesn't look particularly bright for me. I thought Harris was all about cutting my taxes, not imposing a brand-new tax in the form of a toll."

I support my colleague's motion. I say that it is imperative for our future economy that we refurbish our highway system and that the plan the Harris government has embarked on is, in my opinion, doomed to failure.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It's a pleasure for me to support my friend and colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke on a very important resolution.

First of all, I'd like to address the comments made by my colleague across the way, from Carleton-Gloucester, in his revisionist view of history. I'd just point out that the four-laning of Highway 16, which at the time was an extremely dangerous highway, was announced in 1989 by the Peterson government, of which I was part. We were happy to make that announcement and begin that commitment. Unfortunately, the extension was too long, especially during the NDP period, but everyone has to agree that today that particular four-lane highway is safer, is being utilized and has improved the commerce by way of Ottawa through to the 401, Kingston, Toronto and points beyond.

The same must be said, of course, of Highway 17. We know it is doable. The government made a commitment during the election campaign and we know that, once it is done and it continues to be extended, that will be applauded.

The extension has been going on ever so slowly. In recent years we've seen the extension go from the city limits of Ottawa to Kanata, then from Kanata to the Highway 17 exchange, then from there to the Almonte turnoff, where it is today. That has improved the safety in that stretch of land, without question, but we still need the promise to be fulfilled.

I know that many of my constituents in Ottawa Centre use this highway, as do large numbers of businesses in my riding. It's a pipeline for Ottawa and eastern Ontario and the upper valley and, beyond, to northern Ontario. The fact is, it is as busy as it is reflective of the economic value to the city of Ottawa and the Ottawa Valley.

Quick and safe mobility of goods really is, as has already been stated, a building block of economic prosperity. Highway 17 is too overcrowded and unsafe to make that guarantee at the moment. Many trucks use it

because it is the most direct route through that particular corridor. I know I speak for the business community of Ottawa, as my colleagues will vouch for the businesses in the upper valley, when I say that this highway is necessary and would be good for the economy of eastern Ontario and, by extension, for Ontario and Canada.

In terms of tourism, I know that many of my friends as well as myself like to travel to the upper Ottawa Valley to take in the great natural beauty of it, for example the Algonquin Park area and all along the Ottawa River. Almost everyone I know has a story about a close call, a mishap or witnessing a crash while travelling on the highway. I'm quite sure that it causes people to think twice in many circumstances.

Indeed, the government has made a commitment, and it was reinforced by the parliamentary assistant this morning and I'm delighted to hear that. The question is, of course, when will that begin? We've heard promises before that there would be an extension of this four-lane highway to Renfrew, ultimately to Pembroke and beyond and, hopefully, at the same time there will be an acknowledgement of another highway from Sudbury through to Parry Sound, Highway 69, which in and of itself needs some urgent attention as well. But we'll have that debate another day.

I'd like to complete my comments from a personal point of view. One afternoon last summer I was driving home with my wife down Highway 7 back to Ottawa, and we were diverted to another outlet back on to the highway back to Ottawa. We saw that there was a big crash, we didn't know who it was at the time and I was saddened to hear the next morning that the dad of one of my colleagues in our research staff had been killed in that particular accident. The driver, having had a heart attack, swerved into the other lane. My point is, that could have been avoidable had we had a four-lane twinned highway.

I hope that the government will respond as quickly. I'm happy to support the resolution put forward by my colleague.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I'm pleased to join the debate this morning. Given the track record of the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—they've really handed you quite a label for your riding—I'm not at all surprised that, first of all, personal safety is a part of the member's resolution and, second, that it deals with an important matter in his riding. He often sets an example of ensuring that one's riding is given the priority that it needs. I have learned a great deal from watching the member over the years I've been here; and I congratulate my colleague from Mississauga South—is it still, Margaret?—as we all have. I think it is not an over-the-top statement at all to suggest that many of us have learned many things from this member.

I just want to say—

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, go ahead and give him a round of applause. He deserves it. I believe he is also the

dean of the House, or one of the co-deans. That makes you co-dean. You might want to think about that.

Our caucus is very supportive of this measure. Anything that involves people's safety: You know, the government talks a great story about caring about safety and caring about people, but oftentimes we find in this place—pardon the pun—when the rubber hits the road, the reality is that you're not there. You're there in words, you're great with the words but you're not there with the action.

What I think the honourable member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke would have hoped to hear today was a clear commitment or, at the very least, that we would get enough backbenchers from the government who care about public safety and road safety that we could carry a message from this House. Even though motions and resolutions passed here aren't binding, they carry a lot of weight and add moral support to our arguments that are made here in the House, but at this point from what I've seen of the debate it doesn't look like that's going to happen, and it really is unfortunate.

I travel the QEW a lot, obviously, from my riding to Queen's Park, and I tell the government you've got to start paying a lot more attention to transportation and the issues related to transportation such as public transit, and I know there are recent announcements about GO looking at extending their service, that should be a much greater priority. Again, given the downloading exercises we have seen from this government, that is now all the more difficult as a result of your dumping on municipalities all of these responsibilities. That's not even yet to talk about urban public transit within our municipalities which—all of that responsibility—you, the Harris government, have dumped on to municipalities.

In our urban centres we're not just talking about the efficient movement of people and the right that people have to access all parts of their community through an affordable public transit system. The environment is such a key issue, and we know that one of the major pollutants is the exhaust fumes from vehicles, the clean air program notwithstanding, we still face a major challenge. So when you deal with transportation, I would agree that one of the issues is the economics of it.

1150

One of the benefits to the Golden Horseshoe and why we are the economic centre that we are, a lot of it has to do with our close linkage and accessibility to key American markets within an hour's or two-hour drive. Obviously, there's a good economic argument to be made. The first one ought to be public safety. The second one is indeed economic. Then you get into the whole issue of how these things are going to be paid for—everything comes back to money—and you've decided that you're going to put all the money you can lay your hands on into a tax cut, which your wealthy friends benefit from the most.

Today we're going to see the beginning result of your winning the election on a platform of a 20% tax cut. Today we are going to see hundreds of millions of dollars

that the government is going to claim is all about fat and efficiencies, and yet everybody else across the province will see it as cutting into muscle. We're going to see hundreds of millions of dollars announced today coming out of public service for one reason and one reason only: so that this government can give a continuing tax gift to their friends.

People are beginning to catch on. It has taken a few years for these things to settle in and the implications to take hold, but as we see the kinds of pressures building around our education, health care—which are the two big issues out there—there are incredible pressures on both. Now you have to find close to at least what you've announced publicly in a booming economy. That number changes if this economy starts to slide.

We're getting close to \$1 billion that you've identified you have to take out. Anybody who has even a cursory knowledge of what happens with the accounts around here and where the money goes and where it's spent will understand and appreciate that a further billion dollars is going to put enormous pressure on important crucial public services, and transportation at some point is going to be hit.

People are now realizing that they didn't get much out of that 30% tax cut. Yes, it sounded good and they may even have voted for you, but as they watch what's happening in the classrooms, in hospitals, in terms of municipal services, at the library, with recreational services, they're beginning to see that this wasn't a fair trade-off for them. They're not one of those that make \$250,000 a year who get \$26,000 back after taxes. That's what people get who make \$250,000. Under your first round with the 30%, they got \$26,000 after taxes. It's completely understandable why they voted for you.

Any cuts you make in public health, public education, even public transportation, for that matter, since they now have the ability to use highways where they pay directly—we were the ones who introduced that. I'm not trying to dodge away from that. Nonetheless, it's always understood that if you want to pay that money, you can get around something. It's one thing to talk about that in terms of how much is saving 15 minutes on a highway worth to me, versus the only way I can give my kids a decent education is to make sure I cough up the money to send them to a private school; God forbid, as we're seeing in Alberta, Ralph Klein is now—you know the thin edge of the wedge is there—introducing private hospitals.

Make no mistake, it's not going to be long before this government goes there too, because everything that Ralph Klein has done in Alberta, you have followed, or in an attempt to get even better coverage in the right-wing media—by that I mean those that are committed to right-wing Conservative supply-side, trickle-down theory. They've been hailing Ralph Klein as this great beacon of hope for the future and Mike got jealous. Where he can, the Premier likes to do one better than Ralph Klein.

I raise this in the context of this speaker because what the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke needs in order to provide the safety that his constituents deserve is money. It comes down to money. As long as this government has decided that giving continuing tax breaks to their wealthy friends is more important than the safety of our citizens on the highway, more important than the education of our children, more important than providing adequate and sufficient health care services to our families, then we're going to continue to see these kinds of resolutions and motions coming forward and pointing out that you're not delivering.

It was interesting that in the annual report of the Provincial Auditor, tabled the other day, one of the things the auditor points out is that you've been trying to cook the books with regard to contracting out highway maintenance, and by including as a revenue stream the selling of capital assets; in other words, the actual machinery that the government used when they were providing the maintenance to the highways. You were trying to show that there's more money there than there really is. The auditor cut away all your smoke and mirrors, and what was left was the realization that contracting out doesn't work, which we've been telling you for years. Obviously there are places for the private sector, but to believe holus-bolus as an ideology that everything in the public domain is better in private is simply not true. The auditor has now exposed you on this.

Ontarians are receiving less service in terms of the maintenance of our provincial highways and it's costing more money. The only ones who are benefiting are, guess who? Your pals who own the construction firms, who got the contracts when you took it out of the public sector and put it in the private sector. Let's not forget that in the process of doing that, to make this as profitable as possible for your friends—because that's what this was about; it wasn't about providing better highways, it wasn't about improving Highway 17 or any other highway; it was about making sure your pals can make a profit off the taxpayer's back—what did you do to help grease the way? You took away successor rights.

What does that mean in plain language? It means that for everybody else in Ontario, if you sell your company, your corporation, your service and there's a collective agreement in place, by law that collective agreement and the benefits those workers fought for and are entitled to go with the sale—except that this government brought in a law just for public sector workers, because we know that this government thinks that anybody who works for the government is evil. I haven't quite figured out how that doesn't apply to them, since they're in the public trough in terms of where their paycheck comes from, but everybody else in the public sector is deemed to be evil, inefficient, lazy and all those other negative kinds of connotations. This government brought in a law that said, "When we privatize a public service and sell it to our wealthy friends, the collective agreement is dead." Those wage rates that were guaranteed are gone.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've been sitting here for the last 10 minutes and I've been wondering what the member has had to say yet that has anything to do with Highway 17.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That is not a point of order. I would ask the member for Hamilton West to continue.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm not surprised at the interjection. They often do that when you start to get at what is really going on around here; they get all upset. I would say to the member that I think my comments have been very much germane and to the point.

I'm talking about the fact that because you have taken every dime that you can find and have given it to your wealthy friends, there's not enough money to take care of the four-laning of Highway 17. In addition, I'm arguing that not only is there not enough money for Highway 17, there's not enough money for the kind of expanded GO system that we really need, there's not enough money available for public transit in our major urban centres, which also attaches to the environmental concerns that you profess to care about at the same time that you're dismantling the environmental protections that we've built up over decades. I'm arguing also that the money you're taking and giving to your friends by virtue of a continuing tax cut is affecting our ability to put our kids through the kind of education system they deserve and have the kind of health care system they're entitled to. I think that's very much germane to this point.

The fact is that you don't want to hear about what happens after you make the announcement about the tax cut. All you want to talk about is, "Hey, we're going to cut your taxes." That's a wonderful message. We all think that's fine and wonderful. Nobody wants to pay more taxes, but there's a price to be paid. When you're talking of the amount, the billions of dollars, that this government has taken out of health care, education, environmental protection, social services, and yes, transportation, I think it's very much germane to this resolution.

I think quite frankly that had you not given the billions of dollars to your wealthy friends that you did, there would be enough money to put the lives and the safety of the constituents of the riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke in a much higher priority than you have done. I think that's very germane. You may not think so because you do not want to think past tax cut, tax cut, tax cut, money, money, money, money. Listen, we're talking about lives here. We're talking about the ability that you have a responsibility to provide in terms of the safety of the citizens of eastern Ontario, and you're not meeting that obligation because you're taking care of your rich friends.

Mr Conway: I want to thank all of my colleagues for their contributions to this debate. I want to say three things in summary. First, about the money, I was encouraged by the comments particularly from Mr Hastings and

to some extent Mr Coburn on the government bench. I understand the pressure about money.

But I'm sitting here as someone who imagines that I am someplace in the Ottawa Valley, and what do I know? I know that this year I will pay something in excess of \$2 billion provincially in gasoline taxes. If I factor in the fuel tax and the motor vehicle registration fees or taxes, that's another \$900 million. I will know that this year I will give to the provincial government nearly \$3.5 billion of road and road-related taxes.

As my friend from Algoma rightly observed, it is a reasonable expectation that the vast majority of those road-related taxes will go to road-related spending; and we are not doing that. It is a very unfair tax policy to ask rural and northern people, who do not have OC Transpo, who do not have the Hamilton Transit Commission, who do not have the Toronto Transit Commission running subways. If you live in Palmer Rapids and Deux-Rivieres and Calabogie, your car or your half-ton truck, your neighbour's car and half-ton truck, is your way of getting to work, of getting to the hospital or getting to see some business colleague.

We cannot be imposing these road taxes without, as a provincial government, doing a better job of spending a greater portion of those monies provincially on the purposes for which they're intended.

Let me conclude by noting, as the editor of the *Arnprior Chronicle Guide* noted a few months ago on this question: "Will this highway be improved? Yes." But he said, in an editorial, "Will I live long enough to see it or will old age or a highway fatality on 17 take me before that improvement is made?"

What we need, I say to the government, what my constituents in the Ottawa Valley want, is a specific commitment, a specific timetable as to how and when Highway 17 will be four-laned to Arnprior and then to Renfrew.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The time for private members' business has expired.

We will deal first with ballot item number 3, standing in the name of Mr Maves. Is it the pleasure of the House this resolution carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. We will deal with this item concurrently with the other item.

HIGHWAY 17

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item number 4, standing in the name of Mr Conway. Is it the pleasure of the House the resolution carry? Carried.

Call in the members; there will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1205 to 1210.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We are dealing with ballot item number 3 standing in the name of Mr Maves. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Kells, Morley	Mushinski, Marilyn
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Mazzilli, Frank	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Churley, Marilyn	Levac, David
Amott, Ted	Cleary, John C.	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Colle, Mike	Parsons, Ernie
Bountrogianni, Marie	Conway, Sean G.	Patten, Richard
Boyer, Claudette	Crozier, Bruce	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Wood, Bob
Christopherson, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 20; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the resolution lost.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1334.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I wanted to speak briefly this afternoon regarding the Provincial Auditor's report yesterday and just to remind everyone in the House of the kind of discussions we have had in the Windsor area for the last four years around hospital restructuring. How must it feel today for residents from my riding in our area to know that the Provincial Auditor vindicated everything that our community has said since the restructuring process began?

When we turn the pages of the auditor's report, which is the most damning report that has ever been written in the history of the Ontario government's record on how it does its financing of appropriate services in Ontario, this one in particular is most scathing. What's difficult to accept is the fact that what you do is affecting people's lives, in particular our hospitals. We have both Windsor hospitals now running a deficit yet again, one of \$8 million, another of \$7 million. Your one-time funding of many hospitals across the board just before the last elec-

tion was just propaganda and meant to silence your foes before you got into an election.

If I may read "Implementation of hospital restructuring," what he said was, "It needed a careful sequencing of changes." All we can say to that is: No kidding. We have been telling you that for years and you should have been more attentive to the members who represent those ridings.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I rise today to commend our government and the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations for forming a task force to investigate gasoline prices. For far too long now, we have watched the federal Liberals sit back and watch gasoline prices soar right out of sight in Ontario and across the country. In fact, a local federal Liberal member said she wished the gas price problem would just go away because she was tired of it. How dare she and the federal Liberals treat our gasoline consumers with such contempt.

It's crystal clear that the federal government is totally responsible for the gasoline marketplace in Canada, yet they choose to do nothing. Well, our government will do something. We will investigate gasoline prices and present our findings to the federal government, just like we promised in the speech from the throne.

I am proud to co-chair the task force with my colleague, PA for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and the member for Durham, John O'Toole, and serve with the member for Scarborough Southwest and the member from Halton. We've just seen another overnight five- to six-cent increase in the price of gasoline and our consumers are furious. They've had enough. We must get to the bottom of this seemingly endless round of gasoline price increases, and I believe our task force will do just that.

The federal government is responsible for the gasoline marketplace under the federal Competition Act, but they continue to do nothing. We hope our report will spur them to action, because our consumers are fed up and they want action now.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have in my hand the resolutions of municipalities across northwestern Ontario expressing concerns about the inadequacies of the northern health travel grant. I have petitions signed by hundreds of residents of northwestern Ontario communities expressing the same concerns. I have letter after letter bringing concerns about the unfairness and arbitrary administration of this grant. I have the submission from the Northwestern Ontario District Health Council asking the minister for a review of the travel grant. And I have the minister's constant response to every constituent case we raise and to the health coun-

cil itself, saying the ministry has no plans to amend the current policy.

The minister's letter defends a policy which is blatantly unfair and discriminatory. When cancer patients from southern Ontario have to travel to the United States or to northern Ontario for care they can't receive in a timely way in their home communities, all costs of transportation and accommodation are paid. But when northern Ontario residents have to leave their home communities to receive care that cannot be provided at home, they have only a portion of their costs offset. The only justification for this discrimination is that northerners have to do this on a regular basis. For people in southern Ontario, it is hopefully, a temporary necessity.

In fact, there is no justification for any resident of this province having to pay often thousands of dollars out of their own pockets to receive medically necessary care. There is no excuse for the rigidity of the way in which applications for the minimal support that's offered are being handled. It is unconscionable that requests can be refused because of inappropriate application of rules that distort the intent of the program.

It is time to review the northern health travel grant program.

1340

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The Provincial Auditor's report condemns once again and reveals the negligence and gross mismanagement by this government of the Family Responsibility Office, formerly the family support plan. The report confirms everything that opposition members have been saying about this program for over three years now, and it confirms what Shelley Martel and I revealed back in November 1996 when we brought videotape to this assembly to illustrate that the government's claims about the plan being up and running were nothing but pure gibberish and nothing short of an outright—fill in the blank, Speaker. It was an outright, and you know it.

Women and children suffer on an ongoing basis. This government clearly doesn't like women and kids. This government clearly doesn't want to serve their interests. It could be done with even a modest amount of political will, and this government has no interest in that.

This government's gross mismanagement of the family support plan leads to only one conclusion: that it wants to drive the FRO and the FSP into such a state that this government will indicate that it cries out for privatization.

This government continues to spend millions of dollars in a grossly negligent way. This Attorney General has exceeded the capacity of his predecessor, Charlie Harnick, in displaying incompetence and lack of interest in the adequate operation of the FRO system, a very important program for women and kids. This government had better straighten up soon.

OPTIMIST CLUB OF NEWMARKET

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to congratulate the Optimist Club of Newmarket on their 50th anniversary. I recently had the honour to bring greetings from the province at the celebration to commemorate this wonderful milestone.

The Optimist Club, whose members number in the thousands across the world, was built on the philosophy of positive thinking and an upbeat approach to life and work. In this way, its members are able to make a positive difference in the lives of those around them.

For 50 years, the members of the Optimist Club of Newmarket have volunteered thousands of hours to their community, and particularly to helping their youth lead productive and successful lives.

Newmarket has grown a lot since 1949, and the Optimist Club has been equal to the challenge. Through their development of corporate partnerships with community-based businesses, they are particularly able to assist the youth of Newmarket in a variety of ways. They fundraise for the children's ward at York County Hospital; they provide the facilities for army, sea and air cadets to hold their meetings; they sponsor hockey, soccer and baseball throughout the community. Through their tireless efforts and dedication to helping others, the Optimist Club of Newmarket has helped many of our young people know the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, as well as the joy of helping others.

I want to thank the volunteer members of the Optimist Club of Newmarket for all of their excellent work, making the lives of our youth and other members of our community that much richer.

FORT HENRY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On Tuesday, the Minister of Tourism was asked by a government member about the steps the ministry was taking to preserve Fort Henry, a major tourist site attracting 150,000 people annually and an integral part of our history.

The minister said, and I quote, that Parks Canada was "not putting any money into it in terms of a long-term commitment to ensure its preservation." He also patted himself on the back by saying he was proud of the fact that his ministry was putting in \$1.2 million per year.

To set the record straight, what the minister did not say was that in fact the provincial funding over the last four years has decreased by 50%, from over \$2.5 million to \$1.2 million. He also did not say that Parks Canada has set up an endowment fund of \$5 million, the interest from which the fort can use for restoration purposes. It's the first time any level of government has committed permanent funding for the fort.

If the minister is really interested, and I quote again, in preserving these "important heritage properties," let him show this by fighting in cabinet to restore funding to the

1995 level. It's good for Kingston, it's good for tourism, and it's good for our Ontario economy.

To quote the Premier, "On our side of the House, our code of conduct is to insist on the truth," something that seems to have escaped some members on the other side.

PAROLE SYSTEM

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I want to take this opportunity to make the House aware of a movement that is underway in Scarborough.

The former city of Scarborough was the scene of the Scarborough rapist attacks several years ago. Many neighbourhoods have forever been changed because of these attacks. It should come as no surprise that the community's reaction to Karla Homolka's potential parole has been one of complete outrage.

As an elected representative in Scarborough, I have had to deal with the aftermath of these crimes. I believe it is vital to provide the community with an opportunity to voice their anger over recent developments. That is why I have started a petition drive supporting further improvements to the justice system so that criminals such as Karla Homolka who commit unspeakable crimes will find it nearly impossible to gain early release.

Thanks to strong coverage by the Scarborough Mirror newspaper, over 500 copies of the petition have already been distributed. In the first two days of the petition drive, my office received over 200 requests for copies. I have been overwhelmed by the support that I have received from the public, and I look forward to this government building upon its already successful reforms of the justice system.

SOINS DE SANTÉ

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): C'est dans l'intérêt des citoyens et citoyennes de ma circonscription que je dois porter à l'attention de l'Assemblée mon inquiétude à l'égard des coupures à notre système de santé.

Il y a quelques semaines, j'ai pris connaissance de l'annonce de la fermeture de quatre des six cliniques de radiographie dans ma circonscription. La compagnie Diagnosticare Inc est maintenant la propriétaire de ces cliniques.

La clinique d'Alfred a déjà fermé ses portes. Les cliniques de Plantagenet, Clarence Creek et Rockland feront l'objet de fermeture à compter du 30 novembre prochain. Une cinquième, dont celle d'Embrun, pourrait s'ajouter à la liste.

Nos médecins ont été avisés par cette même entreprise privée que les coupures budgétaires du ministre de la Santé étaient la raison de ces fermetures.

On doit comprendre qu'aucun transport en commun n'existe dans ma circonscription. Comment dois-je expliquer aux personnes âgées de ma circonscription qu'ils devront prendre l'autoroute pour se rendre à Ottawa ou à Hawkesbury pour obtenir une radiographie ?

L'autre alternative serait d'avoir recours aux services d'ambulance pour se rendre à la salle d'urgence de l'hôpital de Hawkesbury ou d'Ottawa pour obtenir ce service.

Imaginez l'impact de ces fermetures de services dans nos communautés. Les conséquences pourraient même porter au départ de quelques-uns de nos médecins.

Sommes-nous des citoyens de deuxième ordre, ou, à juste titre, sommes-nous dignes de recevoir les mêmes services que les autres citoyens de notre province ?

TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to recognize Mrs Debbie Smith, a teacher at Terry Fox Public School in Cobourg, in my riding.

Mrs Smith is not an average teacher. Due to her recognition as a "compassionate educator," Mrs Smith will be receiving the 1999 Toronto Sun Teacher of the Year award. She is among 11 other winners who were chosen from about 1,500 nominations.

All of this attention and recognition is unarguably a result of her warm, caring and compassionate approach to education. The Teacher of the Year award was established to promote public awareness of teaching excellence and to encourage parents, students and teachers to focus on positive education practices.

Debbie Smith qualifies because of her positive leadership in education. Her young students even proclaim that "Mrs Smith is the best!" Her superintendent of schools, Beth Selby, refers to Mrs Smith as being energized by what she does for her students. What she is doing is fostering a positive school environment.

I applaud Debbie Smith for being recognized as a Teacher of the Year. I extend my warmest wishes to Mrs Smith, her students, and her family.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that the following amendments be made to the membership of certain committees: Mr Hoy replaces Mr Ruprecht on the standing committee on regulations and private bills; Ms Di Cocco replaces Mr Hoy on the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly; and Mrs Dombrowsky replaces Mr Smitherman on the standing committee on government agencies.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): Today we celebrate children, our most important legacy for the future. I know that every member of this House recognizes the very special place that children have in our hearts and in our world.

On November 20, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child will celebrate its 10th anniversary. This convention is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in world history. To mark this occasion, Canada joins nations around the world in observing a National Child Day.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes children's basic human rights and gives them additional rights to protect them from harm. The convention also acknowledges the important role of the family in raising children.

National Child Day reminds us that all children need nurturing, protection, love, respect and security to reach their full potential. As our province's first-ever minister responsible for children, I am proud that the Ontario government is working towards the goals of the convention.

Today, I would like to share with members of this House a few examples of our commitment to children. Early intervention and prevention are the cornerstone of our initiatives. We are providing a better start for approximately 150,000 newborn babies in Ontario each year by giving new mothers the option to stay in the hospital longer after the birth of their baby. Through the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, we are also providing screening and follow-up care within 48 hours of hospital discharge to see how the mother and child are doing.

Our \$20-million preschool speech and language program is helping 70,000 young children with speech and language difficulties to get the help they need before they start school.

We will soon announce details on a new intensive early intervention program for two- to five-year-old children with autism. Funding for this program will grow to \$19 million annually.

We also provide \$2.5 million annually to our partnership with the Canadian Living Foundation. As a result, over 72,000 children receive breakfast each school day in over 1,330 local child nutrition programs.

Child care is another important support for young children and their families. Since March of 1995, the capacity of Ontario's licensed child care system has been increased by almost 19,000 spaces. This government spent approximately \$700 million on child care services in 1998-99, the highest amount in our province's history.

Further, as many as 350,000 children in more than 210,000 Ontario families with low and middle incomes are benefiting from the Ontario child care supplement for working families.

Through the Ontario workplace child tax incentive, we are also providing businesses with a 30% tax deduction for the capital costs of building or expanding child care facilities in their workplaces and communities.

Clearly, our government's track record on child care is second to none. Every child has the right to grow up in a safe and secure environment. For this reason, our government made vitally important amendments to the Child and Family Services Act to put the interests of the child first. The threshold of risk of physical and emotional harm to children will be lowered, and the word "neglect" will be included as a result of this bill.

Another important government responsibility is to assist children with special needs. Following my discussions last fall with children, parents and service providers in communities all across Ontario, the government announced new funding for children's mental health services, growing to \$20 million annually.

We will also enhance respite care for up to 1,700 families caring for medically fragile and technologically dependent children.

These are just some of the highlights of our government's record so far. I am very proud of our commitment to Ontario's children. But there is still much to do.

That is why Premier Harris commissioned the Early Years Study, and our government has embraced the study's findings.

In the recent throne speech, our government reaffirmed our belief that, to realize their full potential, children must have the best possible start in life. We have committed to build on the pioneering work of world-renowned expert Dr Fraser Mustard and noted child advocate the Honourable Margaret McCain. Ontario's early years program will extend early development opportunities to children and their parents across the province.

I recently announced the creation of five demonstration projects to test different community-based approaches to early child development and parenting.

Our government is also fulfilling another important recommendation of the study, through a task group which will advise us on the key elements and standards for an early years programs. Also, an early years challenge fund will help communities establish and support child development and parenting programs.

Indeed, the Early Years Study will also have a positive impact on children and families in other parts of our great country. Premier Harris feels so strongly about the need to move forward on this study that he made it an agenda item at this year's annual premiers' conference in August. As a result, the study has been enthusiastically received by governments all across Canada. At a recent meeting of the federal-provincial-territorial social services ministers, everyone at the table agreed to move

forward as quickly as possible on early child development.

This government is determined to remain the national leader in early child development. We invite and encourage all levels of government and all sectors of our communities—including business, charitable and voluntary organizations—to join us in a partnership that will fulfill our promise to children.

Our children's hope for a future filled with opportunity, health, security and happiness rests with all of us today. Let us pledge to meet that hope to the best of our shared abilities.

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Our government promised in the Blueprint—our plan to keep Ontario on the right track—that all existing provincial government programs would be reviewed and justified for cost, necessity and efficiency.

I rise in the House today to say that the Ontario government continues to make government work better for taxpayers. To this end, the government has identified an additional \$300 million towards balancing the budget in the next fiscal year.

Government programs tend to grow year after year, layer upon layer, the result of which is constant upward pressure on government spending. We have often said we are here to fix government, to make it work better for taxpayers. Throughout our mandate we will continue to ensure we are doing the right things and doing them well.

In the last few months, the government has reviewed its programs to see if they continue to be relevant and delivered in a cost-effective way.

In the Blueprint, we committed to expand health care funding by a guaranteed 20% over five years. We also promised to increase classroom funding to match rising enrolment. Consequently, neither classroom funding nor health care are part of the actions I am announcing today.

1400

Through this review, the government found that some programs are no longer necessary. It found that others could be delivered better with less funding or with tighter controls and continue to serve Ontarians well. In short, we're working to make government work better for the people of Ontario.

Let me tell the members of this House about some of the savings we have identified. We will reduce costs for government space, saving taxpayers \$12 million. We will trim another \$75 million in administrative spending across government, for a total of almost \$90 million in administrative savings to the public. We will crack down on welfare fraud and make other improvements to social assistance, saving taxpayers approximately \$3 million. This includes requiring recipients to sell a second residence if they choose to be on welfare. Taxpayers will also save an additional \$75 million in social assistance payments next year. Even more savings are expected

from the social assistance budget as our economic policies promote record economic growth and fuel job creation.

These are just a few examples. I will be releasing further details later today. This government understands that governments don't have any of their own money; we only have the money that the taxpayers give us. We have a responsibility to manage that money effectively and efficiently.

Taxpayers work hard for the money they earn. We owe it to them to get value for the money they provide to the government. That's why we are determined to make government work better and to ensure that once we balance the budget, it stays balanced. Ontario taxpayers understand the importance of a balanced budget. They understand because they are expected to balance the books in their everyday lives and they know first-hand that it requires difficult decisions.

We also expect the broader public sector, such as municipalities and post-secondary institutions, which like us are funded by the taxpayers of Ontario, to manage their programs and salary budgets effectively. In the past year, we set an example in our own organization when we negotiated responsible collective agreements with our employees without raising taxes.

Four years ago, this government inherited a deficit of more than \$11 billion. Through tough decisions, the government has stuck to its plan to balance the budget next year, as promised. That progress has not happened by chance. It has taken hard work, tough decisions and, yes, leadership. A balanced budget and a sound fiscal plan are key factors to attract investment, create jobs and remain competitive. This government is committed to reaching its goal of a balanced provincial budget by the fiscal year 2000-01. We are committed to keeping it balanced thereafter. The job is not done. In fact, spending taxpayers' money wisely is a job that's never done. We will continue to work to find better ways to deliver quality programs that the people of Ontario need and deserve.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I wrote to you before noon hour today—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will the member take his seat. You will know the standing orders are very clear that on a point of privilege you need to advise the Speaker. I received it, but I did not receive any detail of what it was.

As you know, on November 3 I also reminded this House that on a point of privilege you're supposed to give me the details of what the point of privilege is about. I received notice but there was no indication of what it was about other than that it was a point of privilege, so I will not hear the point of privilege.

I say to the member, this is the second time I have said to the House that you need to explain in the notice to the Speaker what the point of privilege is all about. I did not receive that.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In fact my letter was very clear. We referenced standing order

1(b), where we talk about the purpose of these standing—

The Speaker: Order. Will the member take his seat. I have a copy of what he wrote, and it was not very clear. It was very simple, one line. It did not explain what the point of privilege is.

The standing orders are very clear. On the first occasion, I heard it, on November 3. I told the House that if it is going to be a point of privilege, then I need to have more of the details. They were not in that letter that came, so it is not a point of order.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker: The same point of order or a new point of order? A new point of order.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, I seek unanimous consent of the House to ask the Chair of Management Board to table it in this House so we can have a democratic discussion of the cuts he's making.

You're hiding them. Our privileges as members are being abused, and you—

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In order for members this afternoon to be able to do their jobs appropriately, surely it is necessary for the minister, because he made reference in his statement, to have all of the details available for this House so he can't simply hide everything until after question period and then do his spinning all weekend, the way the government did with their throne speech and everything else they do around here.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order, and I have ruled on that.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: A new point of order?

Mr Gerretsen: A new point of order. Mr Speaker, I refer you to section 21(c) of the standing rules.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Government members, I can't hear the point of order. Please.

Mr Gerretsen: Mr Speaker, 21(c) of the standing rules, on page 18, specifically states, "Any member proposing to raise a point of privilege, other than one arising out of proceedings in the chamber during the course of a sessional day..."

The point I'm trying to make is that the minister made a statement here that later on he's going to make another statement outside of the House. It's a matter that arose while he was making the statement here today, so it's one in which the required notice of two hours does not have to be given, in my opinion.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order. The member made a statement here to the House in the time for the statements. He made that, and that is not a point of order.

Mr Duncan: Point of order.

The Speaker: A new point of order? The member for Windsor-St Clair.

Mr Duncan: The minister repeatedly referred to a document. Again, we have discussed this in the past with respect to the procedural question facing the Minister of the Environment. I would ask that that document be tabled in the House so the opposition has a fair opportunity to respond to it and that it not be jammed down the throat of this Legislature without an adequate opportunity to—

The Speaker: Will the member take his seat. I've got the gist. As you know, I've said on occasion that when a member refers to it in detail—he did not do that on this occasion, as they did not on the other occasions. It is not a point of order.

Responses? The leader of the official opposition.

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Speaker, first of all with respect to the statement made by the minister in celebration of children on National Child Day, it is nothing less than the height of irony that this comes the very same week that the Provincial Auditor informs this House that there are no less than 128,000 cases before the Family Responsibility Office that are in arrears. That means there are over 200,000 children in Ontario today whose rights are not being protected by this minister and this government, and those are the facts. That's the record when it comes to kids and this government.

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Second, with respect to the other minister's statement, he tells us once again in couched terms that they'll be doing nothing less and nothing more than cutting fat. Well, the last time they said they were going to cut some fat in the Ministry of the Environment, they cut 42% of the budget, they fired inspectors, they gutted environmental protection and they earned us the dubious and embarrassing international reputation of having the second-worst environment record in North America. And to make matters worse, they've taken the man responsible for development on the Oak Ridges moraine and put him in charge of the damn ministry. When it comes to cuts, what they want to do now is make more cuts to the Ministry of the Environment.

The last time they said they were only going to cut the fat in health care, they cut \$870 million from our hospitals, they shut down hospitals and they fired thousands of our nurses, those people who are essential to deliver bedside care. Today in Ontario, two thirds of cancer patients aren't getting the care they need when they need it—that's two thirds. This government is failing two thirds of our cancer patients in Ontario. Mike Harris says: "Don't worry. I've established a lofty goal which is going to inspire my thinking, inform my efforts. I will ensure that fully one half of cancer patients are treated in a timely basis." We say that is nothing less than obscene.

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In addition, when it comes to health care in Ontario, our emergency rooms remain a mess. We still face massive doctor shortages. There are still thousands and thousands of Ontario families that cannot find a family doctor.

Yesterday, we saw that what this government thinks is unnecessary in education; namely, the classroom, programs for blind kids, programs for deaf kids, for the severely learning disabled. That's what this government means when it says its going to do away with inefficiencies in public education. Literacy programs, computers, textbooks—if you can believe it—that's what this government is out to cut, that's what this government thinks of when it says it's going to cut the fat in public education.

I'll tell you where the fat is in this government. It's in the Premier's office. The very first thing the Premier did after the election was to double the size of his own staff. In addition to that, he then gave all of his political staff and all of his ministers' political staffs fat raises, to the tune of 30%. This fell hard on the heels of this government using 100 million taxpayer dollars to fund its own partisan, political advertising campaign—a matter recently pointed out by the Provincial Auditor.

Then there is the little matter of the \$250 million the government spends on its high-priced consultants, most of them with tickets to Tory fundraisers tucked neatly beside their big fat government cheques. That's where the fat is. It's not inside the classroom, it's not inside our hospitals, it's no longer inside the Ministry of the Environment, it's not inside the Ministry of Agriculture, it's not inside any other particular ministry; it's inside the Premier's office. That's where it is.

These guys, at the end of the day, are not cutting back on patronage. They're not cutting back on their spin doctors. They're not cutting back on their own arrogance. The auditor pointed out last week that, in case after case, this government is prepared to find efficiencies even if it costs them more money. That's exactly what the Provincial Auditor just said: "You're not cutting fat; you're hurting people. You're not doing more with less; you're giving us less and you're costing us more."

I can assure you that we on this side of the House will fight this government every step of the way as it continues to cut those services that the people of this province are entitled to depend on, entitled to wake up in the morning and know that they're there for them.

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): In response to the statement by the minister responsible for children's issues, what a disgrace. How could she get up and say this today when the Harris Conservatives have done more to put children at risk than any other government in living memory, have cut the income of children by 22% while giving \$180 million in corporate welfare to Andersen Consulting, which did nothing? Remember

that? They created chaos in the family support plan, leaving thousands of children destitute.

Up to 50,000 children now are using food banks monthly in the greater Toronto area, and more and more of the homeless are children. Disabled kids are sitting at home and not going to school because of cuts to special assistance. We fear that there are more cuts to come to programs. Child care centres in schools are closing. Shame on you, Minister. What a legacy you are leaving in this province for the children.

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Today we see the Harris government's spin control in action again. They're trying to say to people: "Don't worry, this will all be painless. The cuts that are coming are not going to affect you." But the people of Ontario have been around for a while and they know very well that drastic cuts are coming and they're cuts that are going to hurt ordinary people in 100 different ways.

This government talks about fixing government. Is that what you mean with the Family Responsibility Office, when women and children who need support payments go without month after month? Is that what you mean with the Ontario disability support office, when disabled people go without money they're entitled to for five or six months at a time because you don't care enough to get the office to work right? Is that what you mean when we see the nursing shortage that's happening in community after community? Is that fixing government? Is that what you mean when we send more and more cancer patients to the United States? Is that what you mean by fixing government? Is that what you mean when we see more and more people in community after community who can't find a place to live any more, who can't find affordable housing?

Let's be really clear on what's going on here. This is a government that has money for the most well-off people in this province through an income tax scheme that is so totally overbalanced it makes you want to cry. People who have the highest incomes get a tax cut. Ordinary people face higher tuition fees, prescription medicine copayment fees, motor vehicle registration fees and every fee under the sun. Their taxes are going up. Is that what you call fixing government?

The government says it's dealing with the deficit. They're going to do everything they can to give the appearance of a financial balance. But what they want people to ignore is the growing health deficit, the growing education deficit, the growing environmental deficit, the growing housing and homeless deficit and the growing social deficit. Those deficits are going to cost billions of dollars to fix when you're gone as government. You don't have a plan anywhere to deal with the really pressing health and education and environmental problems that this province faces because of what you've done. You haven't fixed government. You've made the things that matter to ordinary people in this province worse and

worse off by the day. What you've announced here today, what you've tried to skirt around, isn't going to do anything about those problems. It's going to make it worse.

I think what we've got here today is confirmation that the leaked government document of Monday is right. You're not going to announce the cuts to education, you're simply going to roll them out over Christmas and in the New Year, so that boards of education and colleges and universities that are expecting that funding, that have to have that funding if they're going to provide the courses and the programs, are suddenly going to discover it's not there. Then they're going to have to make cuts and you're going to say it's all their fault.

Well, it's not their fault. You have a responsibility in this province not just to look after the well-off but to look after the students, to look after the sick, to look after the children, to help look after the environment. Those are all the things that you're neglecting and you continue to neglect. Those are the things that are going to come back to bite you, because those are the things that are biting ordinary people across this province every day, and they know it and they're going to want the answers.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Today is the last day for our pages. I would ask all the members to join in thanking our pages for their dedication.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would also draw to the members' attention that joining us in the Speaker's gallery today is a delegation from the Ontario-Quebec Parliamentary Association. I would ask all members to join in welcoming them as well.

Also, in the members' west gallery is the former member for Hamilton West, Richard Allen.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Chair of Management Board has just told us he's going to make an announcement at 3 o'clock. Could he tell us, please, where he's going to be so we can all be there and listen to what he's got to say?

The Speaker: That's not a point of order, but I'm sure the member can ask the minister.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. I want to talk to you about the double standard that's so obvious to us here today. Apparently, it's OK for the Premier to hire more people and pay them more, but deaf

and blind students will just have to wait and people who are desperately in need of cancer irradiation will have to wait as well. You're not cutting the staff in the Premier's office; you've doubled it. You're not cutting salaries for political hacks and flacks employed by your ministries; you've increased their salaries. Tell us, Minister, how is it that you can tolerate this disgusting double standard?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that when we deal with unions, we negotiate with them and we base it on the market. Sometimes it's a difficult process and we arrive at collective agreements which are fair and reasonable. When you're dealing with non-union staff, the Civil Service Commission makes recommendations. They look at the comparators inside the civil service, they look at what the federal government pays, they take a look at municipalities and they look at regional municipal political staff. I think you'd find that what was recommended and accepted was a change of the ranges in certain ministries. Some were lower in the entry, some were higher to get the skill set they needed.

What this exercise is about is part of our responsibility, part of our commitment to make sure that taxpayers' money is used wisely. I realize that our plan we campaigned on didn't have as much in total quantum of cuts as your plan did, but, nevertheless, we are living up to our commitments.

Mr McGuinty: It doesn't matter how you slice it and how you dice it, nobody out there is going to believe that it is reasonable and justifiable to award your political employees a 30% pay hike in this era, and good luck trying to sell that out there.

Let's just talk about the *modus operandi* that you people have clearly established during the past several years. You announce one thing and then you do another. In fact, that was made perfectly evident in the secret cabinet document that was brought under the light of day yesterday. It said: "Cut education in the classroom, but don't announce that. Don't tell anyone. Let's keep that dirty little secret." You make heartless and you make brainless cuts and then you deny that they ever happened.

Minister, we've seen it all before and this pattern fits your MO perfectly. Now, you have an opportunity. Would you please stand up and tell Ontario children and Ontario hospital patients the real story. What are your plans? What exactly are you going to cut in the way that you've done in the past?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Mr Speaker, I know the Minister of Education would like to refer to the education portion of that.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Mr Speaker, through you to the honourable member who was asking, again I keep saying that if he wants to use the Toronto Star as his research department, I guess he can, but as I said yesterday, the Toronto Star article is not the government's plan.

The other thing I would like to add to the honourable member is—he says, "What is the government's true plan

for education?" Our true plan for education is exactly what we said it would be: to increase classroom funding, to make sure that the priority is in the classroom for those excellent teachers to do what they do best, to teach our students.

Classroom spending, for the honourable member's interest, since he seems to have missed this definition, includes teachers, teacher assistants, computers, textbooks, learning materials, professionals and paraprofessionals, library and guidance, staff development. Those are all important supports to make sure that our children get the education they need. We have been very clear that our priority will be to increase those dollars to match that enrolment—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister's time. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: I want to come back to the Chair of Management Board. Does anybody over there ever stop and think about who it is you might be hurting with these cuts? When you gutted the Ministry of the Environment, as a result we've got more kids suffering from asthma than ever before in our province. We have seniors who are finding it very difficult to breathe. When you made your cuts to education, we've got children who are not getting the services they need when it comes to English as a second language, when it comes to special education, when it comes to early childhood education. Your health care bungling is hurting people with cancer. Their families—their brothers, their sisters, their mothers, their fathers—and their friends and loved ones are desperately waiting as a result of your bungling and mismanagement and cuts.

Does anybody over there recognize how arrogant it is to continue making these cuts without understanding who exactly you're going to be hurting? Does anybody there recognize that? Do you understand that with these cuts once more you are going to be hurting Ontarians?

Hon Mr Hodgson: To the Leader of the Opposition, there truly is a difference between our party and your party. Your party, when in power, raised record spending. If you want to talk about permanent damage to the province, it was the legacy you left the taxpayers of this province and the future generations to clean up, a legacy of uncontrolled spending, unchecked reckless spending. You never met a group that you wouldn't promise something to. That's the legacy you left this province. Our government was saddled with an \$11-billion deficit that it takes—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member take his seat. Order. I cannot hear the answer.

Chair of Management Board.

Hon Mr Hodgson: We were saddled with an \$11-billion deficit and we promised we would get that under control in five years and also have a growth agenda, giving back some money to the people of Ontario, the hardworking people of this province, to restore confidence and get this economy going. I think the results speak for themselves. Ontario is once again leading

Canada in economic growth, record job creation. That's the legacy we want to build upon and a strong economy can provide the services that Ontarians need today and in the future.

The Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Chair of Management Board, to get from him the government's intention on its cuts. I gather from your comments and from the Premier's comments that you plan over the next two years to cut expenditures by 1%. I gather from the Premier's comments that he believes that's about \$450 million in each of the next two years. I think the people of Ontario would simply like you to confirm that that is the number. If that is not the number, what is the number that you and the Premier are using in terms of implementing this promise to cut 1% of spending over the next two years?

Hon Mr Hodgson: We will live up to our promises made in the Blueprint to look for 1% in savings. The bottom line is that we want to make sure this budget is balanced. Today's announcement will be the first step towards that, with a little bit over \$300 million contributing towards a balanced budget for the next fiscal year, and contributing to make sure that that budget is balanced in the out years. For the exact numbers you'll have to wait for the budget that my colleague the Minister of Finance will deliver.

Mr Phillips: I assume that when you made the promise you had some idea of the number. It's as simple as that. Today you're announcing \$300 million. According to what the Premier said in discussion with the media, the total is going to be \$900 million. Ontario wants to know, are we today seeing one third of what we're going to see? Is that the number? If it isn't, tell us the number. But surely, when you made the promise, you knew the number. Surely you didn't make a promise without costing it and knowing how much you're going to cut. I simply, on behalf of the people of Ontario, want to know where you're taking us. You start us down this road. You're going to cut \$300 million today. The Premier's indicated it's going to be a total of \$900 million. If the Premier did not use the right number, tell us now, today, so that the people watching this who are going to be affected by it have some idea where you plan to lead us.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Where we plan to lead this province is to a balanced budget with its fiscal house restored so that we can attract investment to this province and create more jobs.

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): You don't know the answer, do you? "I don't know, I don't know."

Hon Mr Hodgson: To the minister from Windsor, I know one thing: It's fewer dollars than you guys—

The Speaker: Order. Member take his seat. Order. Was the Chair of Management Board done?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Yes.

Mr Phillips: For heaven's sake, you are taking us down a road. You're going to cut \$900 million, apparently. You're going to go out in the hall and you're going

to slash \$300 million and you're going to cut another \$600 million. The auditor couldn't have been clearer: It's going to hurt young people, it's going to hurt our universities, it's going to hurt our education system, it's going to hurt people relying on the family responsibility act. You're going to announce \$300 million in cuts. I want to know today, when you made that promise and when you ran and when you campaigned, what number did you think you would be cutting? What number did the Premier think he was going to be cutting? Is it \$900 million? If it isn't, tell us what it is.

1430

Hon Mr Hodgson: As the finance critic for the Liberal Party, you'd be well aware of what we campaigned on in our Blueprint. Our Blueprint said that we would cut out waste and inefficiencies.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. Order. I cannot hear the answer. I need to hear the answer before we're going to proceed.

Hon Mr Hodgson: You know this full well. In the document that you campaigned on, you said you would cut government spending by more than what we said. We said we would find \$1 in government spending—

The Speaker: The member for Windsor West. I will not warn her again. This is her last warning.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The member opposite knows he can take a look at the assumptions. We want to balance the budget; we will do that. We want to keep it balanced. We said we would look for savings, roughly one cent on every dollar. That's outside of health care and classroom education, to match rising enrolment. You heard the Premier yesterday. He said that's roughly \$450 million, and we will do that in the two years. This is a first step.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education and it's about your government's deception.

The Speaker: I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, I have not accused a person of deception. I said the government is being deceptive.

The Speaker: The member will please withdraw the "deception" comment.

Mr Hampton: I withdraw it.

I want to ask how it is your government one week announces that you've got tax subsidies—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I cannot hear the member asking the question.

Mr Hampton: I want to ask the Minister of Education how it is that one week you come forward and announce that you've got tax subsidies for an NHL hockey team and the next week we have to learn from a leaked document that you're going to cut education again. You're going to cut schooling for students with disabilities; cuts to English as a second language; cuts to literacy; cuts to basic skills training; cuts to boards that are already hurting.

Minister, can you explain to people across Ontario how you have money to subsidize NHL hockey teams but you're still going to go out and cut our schools and cut our children. Can you explain that to people?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, I would ask the honourable member to check his facts. We are not providing tax subsidies to hockey teams. Second, we've been very clear with the voters of this province what our objective and our goal is in terms of public education. A good, strong public education system is our goal and that's what our children deserve. As the students said here yesterday, it is their right.

We have said our priority is on classroom spending. That is indeed where our priority is. We've already increased money there. We are prepared to increase money there again.

We are not proposing to cut services for the deaf and blind students, and I really wish the honourable member would stop spreading such rumours.

Mr Hampton: Let me tell the Minister of Education what's already going on in our classrooms. You will no doubt know about something called the Youth News Network. The so-called Youth News Network approaches schools and says to them that if they will allow biased news broadcasts and all kinds of corporate advertising in the school system, they'll make some money available to them. Schools, because they're already short of money for their programs, are buying into this. That's what's already going on, Minister. No matter how you try to disguise it, people know you're going to go out there and cut education again.

If you're really serious about protecting and advancing education, how about getting YNN and its biased view of reality out of our classrooms and replacing that funding with the kind of funding our schools, our classrooms and our children deserved in the first place?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, we have increased funding for textbooks; we've increased funding for computers; we've increased funding for special education students; and we also recognize that we need to continue to do a better job in special ed, for example, as I said yesterday, as I've said many times. We've got more money there than has ever been there before. We have a new policy, which everyone has agreed is the right policy. But we continue to work with boards and parents because we know that it is still not giving the support it should be giving to special education students.

I would also like to say to the honourable member that I believe the trustees in this province, who are elected by their communities, can be trusted to make the right decisions. I would like to ask the honourable member why he does not trust the trustees, elected by their communities, to make the decisions about what is appropriate in their classrooms in regard to any private sector partnerships they may wish to pursue.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): When is this gobbledegook from this minister ever going to end? This minister rejects the facts put forth by the Toronto Star, rejects the facts put forth by our leader. Is she also

going to reject the facts put forth, the tracking that has been done by the People for Education, who have been voluntarily—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: No, no, you're quite right. We shouldn't trust anybody. Only the Minister of Education is right. We are putting more and more money into education.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member, continue.

Mr Marchese: What arrogant smugness with this government, not just this minister.

They have tracked—voluntarily, unpaid—the problems in the system, the cuts they made to English as a second language, to special education, to education assistants, to specialist assistants, to libraries, to the lack of funding for principals and the diminution of principals and vice-principals. It goes on and on.

This person says we're putting more money—

The Speaker: Member take his seat.

Mr Marchese: How long can you lie?

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr Marchese: I withdraw it.

The Speaker: I apologize. I didn't hear it. Sorry. The member, please.

Mr Marchese: I withdraw it.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate the withdrawal of that unparliamentary comment.

I met with the education group that did that study, and we had a very good meeting. I think that ultimately, if they are able to bring forward comparative data and information, this may well be a helpful report, as are all of the reports that are done by the Education Improvement Commission. It actually showed increased money, money moving out of the bureaucracy, moving into classrooms, which is indeed our goal. They confirmed in their interim report that that is indeed what happened and is happening.

One of the difficulties with this particular report—and as I said, I welcome the input from this group and had met with them—is that there is no comparative data. For example, with textbooks, we have many students, many teachers and many schools that have seen new textbooks this year and last year for the first time because of the increased funding this government has put into textbooks.

Finally, regarding his comment about whom we should believe, I would look forward to that in my next election brochure.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Correctional Services. Minister, it's about the safety of our communities and your plans to privatize jails. Your mega-jails are a recipe for disaster, and they put community safety at risk. You weren't up front with communities when you started

building your mega-jails. You didn't tell them that you were negotiating with Corrections Corp of America, a company notorious for violence and escapes in the prisons it manages in the United States.

Your predecessor before the last election said that you were giving up on the idea of privatizing jails; it was too risky; there were too many unanswered questions. Now that the election is over, you're going back to the idea of privatizing those mega-jails. Don't you worry about communities and their safety? Don't you worry about the horrible record of privatized jails in the United States? Don't you worry about bringing that here?

1440

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I worry about the public safety of our correctional institutions all the time. In fact, that is our ministry's top priority. I worry about whether or not we have institutions in this province that will be able to deliver correctional services to the population that is delivered to us by the judicial system, safely, securely and effectively and efficiently. We worry about that to the point that we are able to make changes and bring forward changes to the corrections institutions in this province. That is why we embarked, in our last mandate, on a program that would renew the infrastructure of the correctional institutions in this province, something that that party over there didn't do when they were in government and something that you, sir, didn't do when you were in government.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Minister, among the jails that you've targeted is the new mega-jail at Penetanguishene. That's the jail where the criminally insane in this province are going to be kept. You're the guru of privatization, and I suspect that you are champing at the bit to get around to our corrections system. But, please, be careful, because you are playing with fire. You'd better take some lessons from the American experience and those communities that have hosted privately run jails—violence within the jails and escapes like never before. Those communities are trying to get rid of their privately run facilities. There won't be any cost savings here but there will be a huge price paid in terms of safety of community and correctional staff.

Your predecessor, Bob Runciman, understood corrections and he understood it well enough to abandon the privatization approach to mega-jails. Why aren't you? What is a life worth to you? What is community safety worth to you?

Hon Mr Sampson: As I said when I responded to the question raised by your leader, community safety is the number one priority of this ministry, and that is why we are going through the infrastructure renewal project in this province, to make sure that we have institutions that are state of the art, that don't jeopardize the security and safety of those within it, whether they be inmates or employees of the institution and this ministry.

The member refers to the new project in Penetang and he leads this House to believe that that's the project that will be housing the criminally insane. That is not correct

and he knows that. I say to the member opposite and the other members, if they want to raise these facts in the House, why don't you make them true facts?

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. We know that under your watch, provincial parks in this province are now up for sale, such as Bronte Creek. We also now see another dramatic impact as a result of your funding cuts. You have cut the budgets of conservation authorities across Ontario by over 70%, with much more to come, I know, in your future cuts that have been talked about today.

We now know that the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority has asked for proposals to sell drinking water to private bottled water companies. This water will be drawn from the Dundas Valley park. Clearly, Minister, you are now forcing conservation authorities to sell water to the private sector in order to try to carry out its programs. We think this is a dangerous precedent. We think this is drawing upon one of our greatest natural resources in this province. We have made it very clear on this side of the House that we do not believe that water and our natural resources are up for sale to the private sector or to the highest bidder. You have forced them to do that.

Minister, can you today commit to restoring the funding that you have cut to the conservation authorities and also to bring in legislation that will prohibit conservation authorities from across Ontario from selling off water to the private sector?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I can say this: We have continued to fund conservation authorities across this province.

I think the member opposite would know that these conservation authorities have been around since 1954 to do work on flood control in those areas, and we share that responsibility and the funding responsibility with the municipalities. We have over the last few years had a series of partnerships with conservation authorities that have led to additional lands being protected and to increasing the amount of activities that those conservation authorities do.

I can tell the member opposite, I can assure him today, that we will continue to fund conservation authorities, that we will continue to make sure they can do their primary job, which is flood control in this province.

Mr Agostino: I'm amazed the minister says that you continue to fund them. You've cut their budgets by over 70% in the last five years—over 70% to their budgets. You basically have slashed their budgets. You're now forcing this. This proposal is the first time a public body in Ontario has turned to groundwater as a revenue-producing resource. You don't seem to understand that. Your answer, Minister, totally ignored the key part of this question: Do you believe in the principle and the concept of a conservation authority selling its groundwater to the private sector?

This is really the principle that's at stake here today. It opens the door to any other conservation authority to do this, some of which are responsible for flood control in Ontario. It now sets a dangerous precedent, if you allow this to happen, with regard to how and why we have conservation authorities, and more importantly, with regard to water and the resource it is and the principle we have that water is not for sale to the highest bidder.

Minister, I ask you again very clearly today: Will you commit to bringing in legislation that would prohibit conservation authorities across Ontario from selling off their water?

Hon Mr Snobelen: First, I want to make very clear that I haven't seen this proposal. It hasn't come to me. I haven't had a chance to examine it in any way, shape or form, so that's first. Second, in the area of funding of conservation authorities, I think it's interesting to note how some conservation authorities have changed in their partnerships and the way they do business over the course of the last few years. The Toronto Region Conservation Authority, for instance, has a budget of some \$32 million a year, of which \$2 million comes from the provincial government; the rest is from partnerships.

I think the member opposite would know from previous answers in the House that a drawing permit for large quantities of water must be obtained from my colleague the Minister of the Environment, and I am sure if he'd direct a question on those sorts of issues to my colleague, he'd be more than happy to answer.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): My question is for the Minister of Labour. A week ago you promised unions in Windsor that you would be bringing in more stringent limits for exposure to metalworking fluids. However, yesterday the Ontario Federation of Labour issued a press release alleging that you broke your promise and excluded these fluids in your announcement to update occupational exposure limits.

You will recall that back four years ago, when you were labelled as a rebel and I was labelled as a rebel-in-training, we had many talks on the importance of keeping your word, on a promise made being a promise kept.

My question is, do you still believe in those words? Do you intend to go back on your promise to reduce workplace toxins?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you for the question. You've learned well.

We announced the OELs on Tuesday, the 213 substances that are now covered. I think the concern they had and the request they made was that there was going to be limits put on metalworking fluids. We agreed with those terms and conditions.

That fact of the matter remains that at this point in time, the American Conference of Government Industrial Hygienists promised to review the subset, and it has not yet been adopted. When that subset has been approved at

that level, we will be happy to comply. We will continue to comply with the new subset levels.

I will also say, I give them the undertaking that we will uphold to commit to never fall behind again and to putting a process in place that will continue updating these exposure limits.

Mr Skarica: Thank you for the clarification and the compliment, I think. Occupational disease is obviously a terrible tragedy that haunts many working people and their families. I commend your ministry for moving to update those exposure limits for hazardous chemical substances, something we know something about in Hamilton.

However, the OFL claims that the process your ministry is using is seriously flawed, is secretive and makes it too easy for employers to establish using false information that implementation of the various proposed limits will be too costly.

Minister, will the process you have adopted actually work to uphold the government's commitment to prevent occupational illness and injury? Are you going to take occupational illnesses seriously?

Hon Mr Stockwell: We have informed the industries out there that they have a 90-day period to conform with respect to the new OELs. They're forced to conform within 90 days. If they're having very difficult restrictions put upon them etc, we will sit down with them and work out a timetable for them to conform. I think it's a reasonable and responsible approach.

Ideally, here, I know the industries are working with the workers, the unions etc, everyone involved, to develop guidelines that are reasoned and thoughtful and are safe to work in. We put that position out very clearly to the employers; we said the same thing to the unions and the employees. We have put a 90-day period on. But I'll tell you flat out, the fact is these are going to be lived up to. The employers must live up to them, because it's reasoned and thoughtful and acceptable legislation adopted by what I consider to be thoughtful and reasonable people on both sides. They have teeth; they will be lived up to. That's the undertaking of this government. I will commit to it.

1450

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment this afternoon. The Minister of the Environment, of course, is the individual in the House who is preoccupied with engineering a takeover of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada by the Reform Party of Canada and is being quite successful, obviously. He is now applying the Reform Party principles to the Ministry of the Environment.

Your government has already slashed the operating budget of your ministry by some 42%, the capital budget of your ministry by 93% and the staff by over one third. Those are the devastating cuts which have already taken place in the Ministry of the Environment: compliance

and enforcement branch, cut by 30%; prosecution staff, slashed by more than half; the number of water monitoring stations has fallen from nearly 700 to just over 200; a 40% reduction in laboratory services; regional offices completely annihilated.

Minister, your ministry, for which you have responsibility, the Ministry of the Environment, cannot afford further cuts. Will you assure members of this House that the boots will not be put to your ministry in the form of even more cuts to a ministry that has already been devastated by the Premier?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would disagree with the honourable member's characterization. We are a government that believes we can deliver better services at less cost to the taxpayer. That's our duty and responsibility, and we do not flinch from that. That means some difficult but necessary decisions have to be made, but we believe we can do that and still be very committed to the principles that Ontarians feel very strongly about, including environmental protection, cleaner air, cleaner soil and cleaner water.

I quite frankly have been very pleased with the progress of the ministry in doing better for less, in keeping up to date in scientific methodology, up to date in management so they can protect the things that need to be protected in a way that is more modern and more cost-sensitive.

In answer to the honourable member's question—because he has a serious question here—yes, I can commit that there are no further cuts to my ministry that will affect the front-line services of our ministry.

Mr Bradley: The weasel words came at the end of that particular statement. It was the Minister of the Environment speaking, but the voice sounded very much like Preston Manning on the policy.

Here is what Eva Ligeti said. Eva Ligeti was the independent Environmental Commissioner in Ontario. She's the person you fired when she criticized you, the way you fire everybody else who criticizes the government. She said:

"Less government in this case means less enforcement and less environmental protection. In order to maintain the semblance of environmental protection, ministry officials have resorted to describing the co-benefits of existing programs, attempting to involve industry in voluntary measures and transferring responsibility for environmental decisions to municipalities. The ministries have yet to produce credible information to demonstrate that these strategies are adequate to deal with existing environmental problems."

Minister, will you submit to the Premier of this province your resignation if he continues to gut, dismantle, pillage, ravage and eliminate in effectiveness the Ministry of Environment of Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: Thank goodness the honourable member's characterization is not the correct characterization of what is going on here. We have a Ministry of the Environment that is still very much committed to

protecting our soil, to protecting our air, to protecting our water. In fact, they are doing their job very well.

Do there have to be improvements? Absolutely, there have to be improvements all across the line. That is something I am committed to, and I know the honourable member, when he was environment minister, was committed to always continually improving—at least, that's what the rhetoric was. We always have a better job to do.

But I will say this, and if he is worried about weasel words, I will say this without qualification: There are no cuts to staff; there are no cuts to programs; there are no cuts to the front line; there are no cuts to administration. There are no cuts.

There is a ministry that is going to be doing better and better to make sure that we have a better environment for our children, a better environment for our grandchildren and something that we can be proud of in the province of Ontario. That is my commitment and that is the Premier's commitment.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is my privilege to ask a question of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I recently read in a report of the Ontario Association of Colleges of Applied Art and Technology that they are expecting a significant jump in the enrolment in the coming years. My constituents in Durham have spoken of the double cohort as well. I found it interesting, however, during my research that in the past decade colleges have seen a 33% increase in enrolment. I think this reflects well on the programs and the accessibility of post-secondary education.

Increasingly, enrolment in the greater Toronto area, especially in my riding of Durham, because of the growth, is an important and timely issue. Can you tell me in the House today what you are doing to help post-secondary institutions in Ontario, not just in Durham perhaps, with the increased enrolment expected?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I would like to thank the member, my colleague from Durham, for the question.

Our government is committed, as everyone knows, to ensuring that there will be a place for every qualified and motivated student in our post-secondary education system. This is a really exciting time in Ontario. We're looking at some 88,000 new students in the next decade and I believe that the first priority of the government should be to get the buildings up. As my friends in the opposition understand, it takes a long time to build these college and university facilities so we did announce and we have committed \$742 million this year alone to accommodate the expected increase in enrolment beginning in the year 2003.

We are working in partnership with the colleges and universities to plan for this increased demand and I can only assure you that we will indeed provide accessible and quality education to each and every one of them.

Mr O'Toole: I know that every student in Ontario feels much relieved with that response, as well as the president of Durham College, Gary Polonsky, and Terry Hing, the board of governors chair. I know they are appreciatively awaiting that kind of response.

Minister, as you just explained, in the 1999 budget our government announced that we would invest \$742 million to expand capacity and modernize Ontario colleges and universities. I understand you recently had a proposal under the funding to help build and modernize the infrastructure. Can you please share with me and the House the details about the SuperBuild Growth Fund as well as the criteria upon which the projects have been judged.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: For the members of this Legislative Assembly, in case they are asked these questions, we know now that the post-secondary sector, because of the demand and the need for the planning that goes on—we can advise our college presidents, our university presidents, our student associations and our communities that indeed we will be receiving money from the SuperBuild Growth Fund this year.

We did think long and hard about what the criteria should be and the first criterion is, the universities and colleges, in their planning, must tell us how many more students they will be able to accommodate for this growth. So that's the first criterion. The second criterion is, who are they working with, who are their partners?

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: No, many of them are working with the private sector or their own municipalities. They are working to help expand financially. They must demonstrate—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take your seat. Your time has expired.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): J'ai une question pour le ministre de l'Office des affaires francophones.

Monsieur le ministre, TFO a appris hier que le fonds de développement économique de l'Office des affaires francophones avait disparu dans la vague de coupures de votre gouvernement, également, que les programmes d'éducation continue pour les francophones seraient coupés et que l'éducation en français n'est pas une priorité pour ce gouvernement.

C'est aujourd'hui le 10^e anniversaire de la Loi sur les services en français. Allez-vous prendre cette occasion pour défendre ces importants programmes auprès du Conseil de gestion ?

L'hon John R. Baird (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones): C'est mon plaisir de répondre à cette question.

Il est très important pour la population francophone, comme pour toute la province, que notre gouvernement

équilibre le budget. Pendant ce processus, bien sûr, il y a beaucoup de décisions qui sont difficiles ; les décisions ne sont jamais faciles.

Dans ce cas, l'Office des affaires francophones doit faire partie de la solution. L'Office des affaires francophones doit être, comme tous les autres ministères, une partie de la solution. C'est important pour nous et c'est important pour les francophones que le budget soit équilibré pour qu'on puisse créer une province où le secteur privé continuera à créer des emplois pour toutes les personnes dans la province.

M. Hampton: Alors, toutes les questions ne sont pas importantes pour votre gouvernement.

Voilà deux semaines, nous avons appris que votre gouvernement allait couper la subvention du collège agricole d'Alfred. Vous avez ensuite rencontré le directeur du collège, qui vous a expliqué que cela obligerait le collège à fermer.

Pouvez-vous maintenant nous assurer que vous ne fermerez pas le collège d'Alfred ?

L'hon M. Baird: Je veux transférer cette question à mon collègue le ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales.

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I just want to point out to the member opposite that the government is very committed to providing education to the farming community in Ontario, and that goes for all the farmers in Ontario, not just the English-speaking. We are very committed to making sure that we provide francophone education for those agriculturalists, particularly in eastern Ontario. We will be looking at finding ways to make sure we provide the most cost-effective education for those people under the present structure.

At present, college education is all funded through an agreement we have with the University of Guelph, and they provide it in Alfred College and in Kemptville, Guelph and Ridgetown. We will be having discussions with the university as to the best possible way to provide francophone education for the farmers in Ontario.

1500

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Ma question s'adresse au ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones.

Hier, ici dans l'Assemblée, nous avons parlé, vous et moi, de la Loi sur les services en français, pierre d'assise pour la communauté franco-ontarienne. Tandis que vous avez souligné les gains de la communauté, moi, j'ai souligné les menaces aux quelques services et programmes disponibles en français. Il y a une menace importante qui plane sur la communauté. C'est la menace de coupures budgétaires néfastes. L'accès aux soins de santé en français, à l'éducation en français, aux services sociaux et communautaires en français, aux services gouvernementaux en français est menacé, tout ce qu'il y a de plus fondamental pour assurer la survie de notre communauté.

Nous avons, monsieur le ministre, quelques institutions clés qui nous livrent les services de programmes en

français, des institutions comme l'hôpital Montfort, le collège d'Alfred, l'Office des affaires francophones, des institutions en Ontario.

En cette journée du 10^e anniversaire de la mise en œuvre de la Loi 8, pouvez-vous assurer la communauté francophone ontarienne qu'il n'y aura pas de coupures budgétaires qui menaceront l'existence même de nos institutions ?

L'hon M. Baird : Au début de ma réponse, je veux féliciter ma chère collègue, la députée d'Ottawa-Vanier, de son élection et de sa nomination comme porte-parole pour les Affaires francophones dans son parti politique. C'est une bonne occasion pour moi de travailler avec elle pour le bénéfice de tous les citoyens de la province.

Une grande priorité pour notre gouvernement, c'est de créer un environnement où le secteur privé peut créer des emplois, et c'est absolument essentiel qu'on équilibre le budget de la province. Pendant ce processus, qui n'est pas, bien sûr un processus très simple, on doit travailler très fort et prendre des décisions difficiles de temps en temps. Il est très important, pas seulement pour la province mais pour la communauté francophone, qu'on équilibre le budget, et d'être sûr que le secteur puisse créer les emplois pour l'avenir.

M^{me} Boyer : Monsieur le ministre, écoutez-moi. L'Office des affaires francophones est le moteur pour l'accès aux services gouvernementaux en français. Sa capacité de remplir son mandat—et j'ai eu plusieurs appels sur ça—est menacée.

Pouvez-vous, encore une fois, assurer les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes qu'il n'y aura pas de coupures au maigre budget de l'Office des affaires francophones ?

L'hon M. Baird : C'est très important pour notre gouvernement de fournir les services en français, les services de qualité dans toutes les régions de la province, et dans les 23 régions désignées. C'est quelque chose qui est très important pour moi. C'est très important pour notre gouvernement.

Une des plus grandes choses qu'on puisse faire pour être sûr que la communauté franco-ontarienne continuera à travailler, c'est l'éducation en français. C'est notre gouvernement qui a créé 12 nouveaux conseils scolaires partout dans la province pour desservir la population franco-ontarienne. C'est notre gouvernement, pour la première fois dans l'histoire de la province, qui a une politique de l'équité dans le financement de l'éducation. Maintenant, chaque étudiant dans chaque partie de la province reçoit la même somme d'argent pour son éducation.

Ce sont deux grands exemples de la priorité qu'on accorde à la communauté francophone, une grande partie de la population de l'Ontario.

AIR QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of the Environment. In a riding that borders on the natural wonder that is the

Rouge Valley Park, it should come as no surprise to you that environmental issues are of great importance to my constituents of Scarborough Centre. That is why I am pleased that our government is working on a plan that deals with air pollution and smog reduction.

However, it concerns me to hear that half of our smog originates in the United States. With our government's continued commitment to smog reduction, how do we combat pollution that we don't even have the power to regulate?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member from Scarborough Centre for the question. I want to assure the member and all members of this House that we are committed to protecting Ontario's air quality and we are aggressively tackling those issues.

The member is correct. No matter how hard we work here in Ontario, 50% of our smog does in fact originate from the United States and travel across their borders and our borders into Ontario. So we are examining all options, of course, to work together with our American friends on the bordering states to Ontario.

But I'd like to let the member know that we have requested and received intervenor status into a US court proceeding to support the United States' Environmental Protection Agency's nitrogen oxide state implementation plan. That is a plan that is going to reduce pollution in about 23 states. I can update this House that on November 9, our government made oral presentations to the court proceedings where we brought to the attention of the court the fact that NO_x emissions from the US contribute to ozone layers in southwestern Ontario. We're the only non-US agency that is heard in this appeal, and we are promoting those essential issues in the United States.

Ms Mushinski: I'm pleased to see, Minister, that you're taking the whole issue of air pollution and smog reduction seriously.

Are there any other initiatives that you can inform this House about that the government is undertaking to ensure the continued reduction of air pollution and smog in this province?

Hon Mr Clement: That's an important point, because we cannot just rely on the United States, even though that is the cause of 50% of our smog. We have to lead by example as well. I can tell the honourable member that we are in fact doing that.

Since 1996, our air quality index readings have been in the "good" to "very good" category 95% of the time. That percentage has been steadily increasing.

We also have Ontario's anti-smog action plan, which is an ambitious initiative to cut the smog-producing agents in our atmosphere by 25% by the year 2005 and by 45% by the year 2015. This is a coalition effort. This is an effort on behalf of the government, on behalf of the industry, on behalf of the NGOs. We have also, obviously, led by example with Ontario's Drive Clean program, which is the most comprehensive program of its

kind in North America. That is designed to reduce vehicle emissions by 22%.

I can assure this House that this government continues to be committed to the improvement—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member's time.

1510

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP, CULTURE AND RECREATION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question to the Minister of Citizenship. It concerns the deep cuts to programs that are essentially in that ministry.

As you know, you have already cut deep into important programs to newcomers to our province who want nothing more than to contribute to Ontario's economy and enter the workforce. You have cut programs such as information books on how to access jobs and enter trades and professions. You've cut the Ontario welcome houses. We used to have one right here on University Avenue. You remember that one. You've cut international language programs. Now, you're utterly destroying a basic and essential program, English literacy or English-language education, which is designed as a basic tool to enter the workforce.

Minister, why would you want to decimate this English literacy program and balance your budget at the expense of newcomers who need this program to get a job? If you don't intend to cut it, stand up right now and say you don't intend to cut it.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): May I say, first of all, that was a very strange question. It sounded like I was cutting and it sounded like I wasn't cutting. Let me say one thing. There is no question that since I've been at the Ministry of Citizenship we've looked at all programs to ensure that they're working well for the people of Ontario. I've looked at them to ensure that they're working for the needs of newcomers in Ontario. I'm committed to making sure that every program in the Ministry of Citizenship works well for newcomers to the province.

Mr Ruprecht: I didn't get the answer to my question. I think you're describing the program of the ministry, but not the answer to my question. Let me ask it again. Let me ask it from the beginning. If you don't intend to cut this program, then why don't you get up and simply say, "You know what, Mr Ruprecht, I don't intend to cut this program"? Stop this gobbledegook, because that's what you're doing.

You seem to be hell-bent on destroying the infrastructure to services to immigrants. These immigrants want to settle here. They wish to participate in our economy. They don't want to be on welfare. They want jobs. To get jobs, one of the most essential services your ministry can supply is to ensure that there are English-speaking services and English-speaking programs.

Minister, just do us one favour, please. Stand up and simply say clearly to the people of Ontario, who want to

know from you today, are you going to cut this program or are you going to give us some more gobbledegook?

Hon Mrs Johns: I am baffled by this question because if the member opposite feels so strongly about newcomer services, you think he would talk to his federal cousins and make sure that they settle the problem with immigration. I suggest that he call someone he knows in Ottawa right now and ask them why don't they settle with the last province, Ontario, in making sure that dollars come to where they rightfully are deserved.

IMMIGRANT SPONSORSHIP

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. There are a large number of constituents in my riding of Scarborough Southwest who are concerned about the issue of deadbeat sponsors. Minister, deadbeat sponsors, by shirking their agreement and walking away from agreements they have made with the federal government regarding immigration, are leaving the taxpayers of our province on the hook. I also understand that it is the federal government's responsibility to enforce sponsorship agreements and that by allowing deadbeat sponsors to walk away from these agreements, the federal government is placing a burden of more than \$100 million on the backs of the taxpayers of our province. On top of this, I also understand that the federal government allows welfare recipients to become immigrant sponsors.

Minister, there is one point I'm not clear on: The Chrétien Liberals claim that they are already covering the additional costs to our welfare tabs through the Canada health and social transfer. If the Chrétien Liberals are already picking up the bill, why are you asking for more money?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to say at the outset that this government and people in the province of Ontario strongly support immigration. Our province has benefited tremendously, socially, culturally and economically, as a result of the benefit that immigrants have brought to this province.

We are concerned as a government and municipalities are concerned, as taxpayers are, about the large number of deadbeat sponsors, people who accept to undertake obligations to care for people coming to Canada searching for a better life, but we are concerned that 17,000 sponsored immigrants are allowed into Canada. The federal government sets the criteria on who can sponsor an immigrant. The federal government then signs these sponsorship agreements, and their lack of living up to the responsibility is costing taxpayers in Ontario more \$100 million a year. That's a burden that Ontario taxpayers face, that Toronto and Peel taxpayers face disproportionately. We're calling on the federal government to accept their responsibilities and stand up for Ontario.

Mr Newman: My supplementary is to the same minister. The people of my riding of Scarborough Southwest and across Ontario are obviously concerned about how

taxpayer dollars are best spent. After all, our government was re-elected in part due to its promise of making government more accountable to taxpayers. So it's understandable that constituents in my riding are very concerned about this issue, and I join them in that concern.

When someone agrees to be a sponsor, the federal government approves the application, that sponsor bears all financial responsibility for that person for a 10-year period. They specifically commit to that person that they are responsible and will not go on social assistance. Yet the federal government continues to allow this very thing to happen.

Minister, how is it that the taxpayers in Ontario and in my riding of Scarborough Southwest have to foot the bill for the Chrétien Liberals and its deadbeat sponsors?

Hon Mr Baird: I share the concern that the member's constituents obviously have. I share the concern that Mayor Lastman and Peel region are bringing to the table. It is a concern that the federal government is refusing to step up to the plate and accept their responsibility.

The criteria that they have established for sponsorship are lax. The fact that they sign these sponsorship agreements and then fail to live up to the responsibility is a real concern for me. But for the federal government and the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to stand up and say that all immigrants and refugees are part of the calculation of the CHST funding is absolutely outrageous.

When this government was fighting Ottawa to get Ontario's fair share of health spending, the federal government was very clear: They wanted an ironclad agreement from this government to spend each and every cent of that new money on health care. Every Premier in Canada signs a letter promising to spend every new dollar on health care. Then the Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, said, "I welcome the important commitments using all of this increase on health spending." We're not—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take a seat. It's time.

1520

GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Yesterday I asked you not to close the Roberta Bondar place in Sault Ste Marie, and you told me that you would pass my concerns on to the Ontario Realty Corp. I hope they listen.

Today, I am raising with you the spectre of at least two other closures or sell-offs in Sault Ste Marie, the bush plane museum—you've been there; the Minister of Natural Resources spoke about it here last week; you know how important that is in terms of tourism and the future of the Sault—and the Ontario Forest Research Institute, a first-class research institute in Sault Ste Marie that represents a future in that area for our community.

All of these facilities are one-time hits. You and your benefactors and rich friends are like junkies: high on the largesse of your tax breaks, paid for by the loss of

services and these one-time hits. There's no future vision here. Minister, will you tell the Ontario Realty Corp to take these facilities off the list?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Thank you for the opportunity to clarify the record. I understood your concern yesterday was that you keep the keep the name of the Roberta Bondar Centre. I passed on that concern to the Ontario Realty Corp, that if they determine it makes sense to sell this building, they would explore the possibility of keeping the name attached to the building.

In regard to your broader question, of course I've been to the bushplane museum. It's one of the great attractions of Sault Ste Marie. We helped fund it through the heritage fund.

By doing a business case analysis, realizing that we don't need to own the assets to deliver the service, we'll free up more dollars for health care, education and maybe even some cultural attractions that remind us of our glorious past in the MNR like the bushplane museum. It's only by taking these assets and looking at them seriously to determine whether we need to own them or not to deliver the program that we'll have the dollars available to do those kinds of worthwhile projects.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the estimates committee.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent. Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 62(a), the standing committee on estimates shall present one report with respect to all estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 59 and 61 no later than December 2, 1999, and that all other sections of standing order 62 shall apply to the December 2, 1999, reporting date.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Sterling has moved that—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PETITIONS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep receiving petitions to reopen the hospital emergency wards in the west end of Toronto. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the residents in the west end of Toronto no longer have emergency room service at the Humber River Regional Hospital, formerly known as Northwestern Hospital, the Keele Street site; and

"Whereas the west end of Toronto is the hardest-hit area for emergency restrictions in all of Toronto; and

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris and Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer have promised changes to deliver a solution to the mess they initially created by closing hospitals; and

"Whereas it is not acceptable to Toronto residents that every one of the eight emergency room departments in the city's west end were closed on Monday, January 22, 1999;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on Premier Mike Harris and his government to immediately address the health care problems in the west end of Toronto by re-opening the emergency room at the Northwestern hospital, now known as the Humber River Regional Hospital's Keele Street site, and increase the number of in-patient hospital beds and keep its promise for interim long-term-care beds."

Since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I'm signing it as such.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I will sign this so that it is properly made a record of this assembly.

HENLEY ROWING COURSE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Henley rowing course in St Catharines is an outstanding rowing facility which has for several decades been the site of hundreds of international rowing competitions;

"Whereas the World Rowing Championship has been held in St Catharines in 1970 and 1999 and has been declared an outstanding success on both occasions;

"Whereas the municipal, provincial and federal governments, along with generous private donors, invested several million dollars in the upgrading of the Henley rowing course to enable the 1999 World Rowing Championship to be held in St Catharines and that as a result the Henley is a first-class rowing facility;

"Whereas the organizing committee of the World Rowing Championship, the annual Royal Canadian Henley Regatta and other prestigious regattas, has the proven expertise to operate major, international rowing competitions;

"Whereas all taxpayers in Ontario will be compelled to contribute to any financial assistance provided by the Ontario government for the Olympic bid of the city of Toronto;

"Whereas the creation of a new rowing facility outside of St Catharines for the Toronto Olympic bid would result in the unnecessary expenditure of millions of dollars to duplicate the St Catharines rowing facility;

"Whereas the rowing facility for several, recent Olympic Games has been located outside the sponsoring and host city;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to persuade the Toronto Olympic bid committee to propose the Henley rowing course in St Catharines as a site of the rowing competition for the 2008 Olympic Games."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): I have a petition wherein 4,200 residents of the city of Gloucester and the city of Cumberland have affixed their names.

"We, the undersigned, do not support one big-city government or bigger regional government in Ottawa-Carleton. Bigger is not better. It moves governance away from the people. We want the government to be streamlined, efficient, accessible, accountable, flexible, affordable and respectful of community interests and services delivered at the level closest to the people.

"We request the Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to consider other models of governance, with one set of elected representatives, with a reduced number of cities which best meets the needs and respects the uniqueness of our community interest across the region."

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): As you know, this year the city of Toronto school board has closed 10

public schools and is set to make the announcement at the end of November to close 10 more. This petition is very appropriate. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government's decision to slash education funding could lead to the closure of many neighbourhood schools, including one of the most community-oriented schools like F. H. Miller Junior School; and

"Whereas the present funding formula does not take into account the historic and cultural links schools have with their communities nor the special education programs that have developed as a direct need of our communities; and

"Whereas the prospect of closing neighbourhood community schools will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools; and

"Whereas F. H. Miller Junior School is a community school with many links to the immediate neighbourhood, such as the family centre, after-school programs, special programs from Parks and Recreation, and a heritage language program;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens, demand that the Harris government changes the funding formula to take into account historic, cultural and community links that F. H. Miller Junior School has established."

I'm in total agreement with this petition and I'm signing it as such to make it valid.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways, when Bill 8 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered to the standing committee on justice and social policy; and

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That the standing committee on justice and social policy shall be authorized to meet at any time during its regularly scheduled meeting times as deemed necessary by the committee; and

That, pursuant to standing order 75(c), the Chair of the standing committee on justice and social policy shall establish a deadline for the tabling of amendments or for filing them with the clerk of the committee; and

That the committee be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment on the final day until completion of clause-by-clause consideration; and

That, at 4:30 pm on the final day designated by the committee for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill and not later than November 30, 1999, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill, and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration, and not later than December 1, 1999. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on justice and social policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That, when the order for third reading is called, the remainder of the sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At the end of such time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That, the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the divisional bell shall be limited to five minutes.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Our government introduced Bill 8 for three reasons: first of all, to respond to concerns raised by the people of Ontario about activities that interfere with the safe use of roads, sidewalks, parks—activities such as squeegeeing and aggressive solicitation; secondly, to respond to police concerns about not having the tools to deal effectively with these activities; and thirdly, to keep our promise, made in the Blueprint and again in the throne speech, to make Ontario a safe place for families and individuals, for everyone in Ontario.

By proposing to make commercial activities such as squeegeeing on our roadways an offence under the Highway Traffic Act, we are helping to make the streets

safer for drivers, passengers and pedestrians, and reduce traffic hazards.

By proposing to create new offences for aggressive solicitation and solicitation in places where people cannot easily walk away, we are asserting people's right to use streets and sidewalks in a safe and secure manner without being apprehensive.

By proposing to make it illegal to throw broken glass, syringes and used condoms in neighbourhood parks, we are saying that children and families deserve to safely enjoy outdoor spaces.

Bill 8 is about protecting community life by protecting people's ability to use public places in safety and security. The Safe Streets Act is about enhancing quality of life in our province. When a person, young or elderly, can enter a store without being blocked by someone aggressively soliciting, we have quality of life in Ontario. When parents can pull up in the car at an intersection with the children in the back seat and not feel worried about being approached by someone selling a service with a squeegee, to perform unwanted services, we have quality of life in Ontario.

Police in Ontario have a duty to serve and protect the safe use of community spaces. When existing tools are inadequate to crack down on unsafe behaviour, police have the right to ask the province for help, and we have an obligation to respond. That is what being a responsible government is about; that is what leadership is about.

Our government has proposed in Bill 8 to give police arrest powers for the new offences created under the Safe Streets Act. We want to help officers deal more effectively with complaints they receive from residents and business people about these activities. We have proposed giving the courts a range of options for sentencing convicted offenders, including jail time for repeat offenders. We want to send a strong message that unsafe behaviour on the streets of Ontario will not be tolerated.

We know that there are complex issues around the circumstances of people who engage in activities like squeegeeing, aggressive solicitation and disposing of dangerous objects in parks and laneways. However, help is available, and always has been, from the province. Ministries allocate billions of dollars every year on social programs such as youth and adult employment programs, including apprenticeships, job training, literacy programs, initiatives to help get homeless people into housing and to prevent more people from becoming homeless and, for those who need it, mental health treatment programs at the community level and through the justice system. There are alternatives, there are options, and there is the prospect for a better future.

Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act, is intended to regulate conduct that interferes with people's ability to use public places safely. The bill is intended to enhance quality of life in communities for everyone in those communities. It is one element of our broad effort to make our towns and our cities safer places to live and raise families. The people of Ontario have the right to be safe and to feel safe in their own communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further debate.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. Unfortunately, I'm speaking on yet another time allocation motion, or, as the people at home should know, another motion which closes off the debate in this Legislative Assembly on yet another piece of legislation. This has become a habit of this government. I guess one could say—although in the opposition, one never says this—that one could at least understand if the government were to try to limit debate on legislation if the government sat for a long period of time and saw that its legislation was not moving. However, the tactic of this government is quite simple: They never have the House in session at appropriate times, and then they bring the House into session late and try to jam everything through at once so there's as little debate as possible on major pieces of legislation—though I don't know if I could call this major—or at least on a controversial piece of legislation.

1540

Yesterday afternoon, I was up in this House once again discussing an issue which was a time allocation motion and nothing else but a time allocation motion.

The best legislation comes forward, obviously, with any government, when there's an appropriate time for debate. In the end, we recognize that the government has been elected with a majority of members and therefore the government is going to certainly have its opportunity to pass its legislation. If the democratic process were to work appropriately, however, we would require a sufficient amount of debate to canvass all the issues, to have the public at home and the members of the news media, who are now filling the press gallery today, listen to this debate and be able to determine whether there are improvements that could be made to the legislation or indeed whether the legislation should be withdrawn. Instead, what we have, of course, is the government once again putting the boots to the opposition and shoving its bill through the Legislature. This is not healthy for democracy.

The member for Niagara Centre and I were chatting with a classroom at Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School. There are a couple of classes from there who are visiting today. Sir Winston Churchill is physically located in the constituency of Niagara Centre, represented by Mr Kormos, and a number of the students reside in the provincial constituency of St Catharines, which I represent.

One of the things we mentioned to the students—they had only a chance to see the private members' hour this morning when they were in the gallery. They didn't see very many members, by the way, at that time, but there was an explanation of what happens, where other members might be or what the degree of interest might be in a particular piece of legislation. But what we both indicated to the group that was in today was the diminishing of the role of the elected representative in the Legislative Assembly and how they should be vigilant—because

Heaven knows the news media will not be vigilant about this—about the fact that so little attention is being paid to the democratic process as it should be.

There are people over there who are involved in big business and small business. I don't believe that a small business or a big business should have its decision-making process as the Legislature does; it wouldn't make sense. It's a different milieu; it's a different circumstance. While I believe you can apply some business practices to government and that could be beneficial, I do not believe that the decision-making process should be the same, because we live in a democracy.

This democracy, almost on a monthly basis, is eroded with more and new rules designed to make the Legislature more efficient. If my staff were watching this at the present time, they would bring me the column in the *Hill Times* by Dalton Camp which deals with this very matter. Dalton Camp wrote a recent column which described the Harris administration. Dalton Camp, by the way, used to be the chief guru of the federal Progressive Conservative Party, a very highly respected individual in journalistic circles, and certainly in Conservative circles. He was in fact an adviser to prime ministers and well known within the party, an astute and perceptive observer of what is happening across our country today and the author of a book entitled *Whose Country is this Anyway?*

He observed that every government wants to be dictatorial in one way or another, and there are varying degrees. I don't compare this government with the most dictatorial governments. I'm not unfair enough to do that, obviously, and it would be inaccurate. But he said that every government that wants to have a dictatorial circumstance uses the same argument, that the legislative branch must be more efficient.

I heard somebody who had won an election in another country in the world saying that the other day, that one thing that person was going to do was make their Legislature more efficient, more responsive to the executive branch.

Unfortunately—and it is our British system; I understand that—in this Assembly, all power is located in the hands of the Premier's office. These were the whiz kids who got the 30% increase in pay. In fact, they're making more money than most members of the Legislature. Even though many of the members have an additional stipend for additional duties or responsibilities they have on the government side, still the whiz kids make more money. The backroom men and women in the Premier's office make more money than many members of the Legislature and in fact have more power, when it comes down to it.

When you keep taking away from elected members, their ability to influence the decision-making process, then you diminish this House and you diminish the reason for all of us who are elected to this Assembly.

Now, it's difficult on the government side for those who know they are never going to be in the cabinet and do not want to ingratiate themselves with the Premier. Those people tend to be a little more objective and understand these issues. For those who want to grovel at

the feet of the Premier so that they can be in the cabinet, those who would be in great danger of a collision if the Premier stopped quickly in his tracks, those people of course will accept the fact that the executive branch of this government is all powerful.

I have been in this institution since 1977—the member for Etobicoke-North will say far too long—and I have witnessed that erosion of the role and responsibility of members of this Assembly. I well remember Bill Davis. Bill Davis understood democracy. He understood that you had to have appropriate debates in the Assembly. He knew that the Legislature should be in session so that bills could be carefully scrutinized and analyzed. He knew that there should be sufficient committee time to be able to have public input.

Those were the days when the Conservative party was responsive to the public, where it wasn't the captive of a small group of right-wing ideologues who worship at the altar of the Republican Party in the southern states of the United States. Those were the days of the Davis Conservatives, the likes of Bob Welch, a wonderful representative for Lincoln and St Catharines-Brock and Brock ridings, whose granddaughter, by the way, Katherine Kerley, was here today visiting the Legislative Assembly with the group from Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School.

Bob was a moderate. Yes, he was a Conservative. He was a cautious individual, he wanted to make sure that the dollars and cents were appropriately counted, but he was a person in this assembly as Deputy Premier and having held most of the posts in the government, an individual who had a great deal of respect for the democratic process.

I think of people such as Tom Wells and now His Honour Judge McMurtry, Roy McMurtry, people of that ilk. They were very responsive to the will of the people of Ontario. I disagreed with them from time to time, I want to tell you that, but I respected the fact that they allowed for debate and discussion, that they didn't stomp on the opposition as we have seen the opposition stomped on by this government.

It all began with Bill 26. The member for Niagara Falls today brought in a resolution which called for the invoking of Bill 26, and the people who are part of the medical profession who were concerned about Bill 26 thought, "Isn't this something to be concerned about?" I agreed with the medical doctors at that time, and there was no question that they had reason to be worried, because today the member for Niagara Falls—by the way, putting forward an issue that deserved to put forward, and I want to commend him for that—proposed a draconian solution. I was flabbergasted to see members of the right wing of the Conservative Party in this House voting for it. I noticed that there were only 20 of them but at least those 20 were in to vote for him.

1550

Now, the member for London West certainly stood up for individual rights and did not vote for that resolution, and I want to commend him on that. My friend from

London West as well, I want to note—and he will not criticize me for sharing this with you—sees the committee of which we are members—I happen to be lucky enough to be the Chair of the government agencies committee and the member for London West is a member of that. He noted to our committee, appropriately, that other committees—we thought we had this right—had a right to bring forward bills that must be debated in this Legislature, and lo and behold our committee doesn't have that right. He and I are going to team up on this issue. He and I and other members of the committee are going to team up to see that our committee has a chance to also put forward bills from its members, and I think that's as it should be.

By the way, I think that's a good change in the rules. I don't want to say everything the government has done is wrong; that's a good change in the rules. I'm a fair-minded person.

The member for Etobicoke North, who often interjects when I speak, will want me to read into the record what Dalton Camp had to say in the *Hill Times* of November 8. Let me share with you what he had to say because you will remember—of course, I look around and you won't remember, but Ernie Eves will remember or perhaps Norm Sterling will remember that the Dalton Camp commission, appointed by the Davis administration, made recommendations for this Legislature. Let me share with you what Dalton Camp has to observe about the present circumstances. I'm going to read verbatim, because I want to quote from an authority. Dalton Camp says the following:

"All in all, another day in the life of the Mike Harris Conservative-Reform-downtown business and handball club government of Ontario. A group of whiners held a media conference to register a complaint over a government cut of \$2.6 million from programs helping women escape their abusive spouses. The government, it should be known, needs the money for escalating speech-writing fees and more adhesive tape to close the mouth of its hapless environment minister, Tony Clement, heretofore known to the *National Post* as 'a statesman.'

"Clement captivated his cabinet colleagues by cracking wise about wife-beating from his seat at Queen's Park. He later withdrew the joke.

"Beneath all this Harris era levity there is the calculated effort to emasculate the opposition in the Legislature by changing the rules inside and painting the world with the green ink of political donations outside. The prize for this is a tighter grip on power and the ultimate triumph of personal ideology over public responsibility. This is easier done because of a supine, blandly indifferent public that continues, out of memory and word association, to see some resemblance between John Robarts and Bill Davis and Mike Harris.

"What has been learned of our legislative system, often described as parliamentary democracy, is, to paraphrase Churchill, that it is not the greatest system in the world but merely the best we know. What can be said for it is that it allows government to function, and that is

functions best when it enjoys a strong opposition whose powers are sufficient to test and probe government legislation, without providing the government from governing—something only made possible in the American system.

"It is wearying to document the proposed changes the Harrisites are going to make in Ontario's House rules. Among them"—and this is the predicted changes; of course, the opposition helped block these changes and bring the government to it's senses for once. "Among them, a reduced quorum from 20 to nine, which will encourage more absenteeism, more nights for play and less public interest in the proceedings. Then—and no surprise from a government prone to falling over its own tongue—a shorter question period. As well, changing the order of questions as set out in standing orders to a dependence upon the whim of the Speaker. And so on, and on.

"The government's justification for this is, of course, that muzzling the opposition makes for greater efficiency in the discharge of public business.

"The need for greater efficiency has been, as we know, the obiter dictum, or campaign slogan, of every pettifogging dictator since Ghengis Khan, a conviction that justifies the silencing of any and all opposition as an offence against public order and administration tidiness.

"Meanwhile, the Ontario government, hopelessly hooked on the morphine of money, is steadily undoing the work of the Ontario Election Finances Reform Act of 1975 and the Election Finances Act of 1986, both engaged in the effort to limit the influence of big spenders in party financing. The principal focus of the Harris government has been to make it easier for large contributors to donate more to the Harris party.

"In a report prepared this year by York University's Robert MacDermid for the Centre for Social Justice, the author defines the Harris effort: 'The changes significantly raised contribution limits, giving more influence to businesses that make up about 95% of those who gave the maximum contribution.'

"As an example, between 1995 and 1997, contributions from Canadian Highways International (\$387,531), Coretellucci-Montmarano (\$335,839), and Barrick-TrizecHahn-Munk (\$312,828) lead the pack of corporate donors to Harris Toryism. Others were not far behind.

"The Harris party has become far and away the richest provincial party in Canadian history. The irony, as MacDermid points out, is that the greatest donor of all has been the Ontario taxpayer: Tory donors got \$7 million in tax rebates for their contributions.

"Harris's corporate sponsors acknowledge the Premier's fierce concern for his party's financial well-being. One imagines him, after a busy round of cutting government expenditures—among this, \$2.6 million wrenched from the budget for battered women—then adjourning to the company of his party treasurer to count the party's money.

"This is Ontario?" he asks. I thought Dalton Camp had a very astute and perceptive observation of what is going on in the province of Ontario.

We're not talking about a Liberal, we're not talking about a New Democrat; we're talking about a Conservative, but one unlike the Minister of the Environment, one who does not want to see the uniting—I shouldn't say "the uniting;" my friends in the business community will help me with this—engineering the takeover, friendly or unfriendly, of the Conservative Party of Canada by the Reform Party of Canada. We've already seen that takeover take place provincially. The Minister of the Environment wants to see that happen on a federal basis.

So we can see from an independent, objective observer like Dalton Camp that this government is indeed engaged in the diminishing of the democracy of the province of Ontario.

The merits of this bill should be discussed in full and comprehensive and extensive debate. Instead of debating time allocation or motions which choke off debate in this Legislature, what we should be debating are the intricacies of the bill, the hostages that we see in the bill. From time to time, my colleagues will know, you will find somewhere in the bill a hostage, something nobody saw.

I looked in the red tape bill, for instance. You'd be interested to know, Mr Speaker, that they want to further diminish the role of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, which is there to protect escarpment lands, a beautiful territory that my friends Mr Tilson and Mr Sterling and I would like to save. I looked in the red tape bill and there they are again trying to diminish that, much to the applause, I'm sure, of my friend Bill Murdoch, the member for Grey county, who would like to see it abolished completely. It's a death by a thousand cuts which is taking place, which is certainly of concern.

Time and again we see this government moving away from this Legislature and using its vast resources, both the taxpayers' dollars and their own party funds, to set the debate in public. They did this before the last election. You will recall that the auditor was very critical of what they did in terms of advertising. But you see, the smart guys in the background, the ones who like to hang around the politicians—I see some of them in the government gallery from time to time; not now. They sit there with their smirks on their faces—not the person presently there—and say, "Ya know, we've got a lot of influence over this government."

1600

They think it's smart. They think when you take \$100 million of taxpayers' money and use it for advertising which is clearly—even the auditor alluded to this—of questionable value but certainly bordering on—I would say not bordering on but most assuredly a waste of \$100 million by this government on self-serving government advertising. This from a party that already has money falling out of the treasury chest.

The biggest building boom in Ontario today is for bigger halls to hold the Tory fundraisers, to get all those developers and people who benefit directly from the

policies of this government which put the boots to the poor and helps the richest, the wealthiest and most powerful the most. Those halls are bulging with people who go to the fundraisers, paying big bucks. Mind you, they get a tax credit back, as all donations are eligible for tax credits. There they are, large as life.

My friend the environment minister is back. I made reference only through quoting Dalton Camp. I want to assure him I was not making any personal remarks about him; I was simply quoting an article from Dalton Camp where he mentioned the member, who is assiduously endeavouring to unite the Reform Party and the federal Progressive Conservative Party, much to the chagrin of that distinguished statesman Mr Joe Clark, who has been such a stalwart within the Conservative circles for so many years.

I look forward to something other than this kind of debate in the future. I hope you will abandon these constant debate-limiting motions in this House. I hope what you will do is bring the House back when you're supposed to. Mike Harris, who always says, "Everybody else should work harder," had this Legislature sit only seven days.

The member for Davenport will be shocked to know that, perhaps, but the House sat only seven days previous to coming back another month late in the fall session, in late October on a Thursday afternoon and then headed off home for the weekend—well, first of all, after the speech from the throne, headed to the Albany Club to celebrate, to tinkle the glasses together and to drink Scotch or whatever it is the rich people drink at the Albany Club, the friends of the Tories; Scotch and the most expensive of wines.

Anyway, I promised my colleague from Davenport that I would share some time with him this afternoon because he too is perturbed by the government's action in limiting debate, in constantly eroding the democratic process and in making the fundraising and fund spending of this government, the huge amounts of money that this governing party, the Conservative Party, spends in Ontario to be a major factor. Whenever money dominates politics, you can be assured that corruption isn't far behind and you can be assured that the system is diminished by it. Take a look at what happened south of the border in the United States. There is the lesson.

I hope members will look into their consciences and request that the Premier not invoke these kinds of resolutions again.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): We were speaking to this matter only a couple of days ago. This matter has only been on the floor of the chamber, in terms of debating, for the equivalent of two afternoons. I've got to remind myself that of course we're not debating the bill today, are we? We're debating the time allocation motion.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: People over there are somewhat cynical. I intend to abide by the rules. I intend to abide by the standing orders and to conduct myself in compliance

with those standing orders and the process that has to be followed. That means I've got to address my mind to the time allocation motion rather than the bill itself. I understand that.

Today is the last working day here in the Leg for the pages. I know the Speaker introduced them when they came here and then, early this afternoon, acknowledged their having served their term here, but I want to especially thank the young page from my riding, from Niagara Centre, Justin Tisi. As has been noted, and Jim Bradley a few moments ago made reference to the students who were here, there have been any number of pages who have been here and served this Legislature, and I tell you, all of them have been remarkable. But Justin Tisi I think goes home after tomorrow with some special sense of accomplishment. He's performed exceptionally well, and you will know that his mother, Vivian Tisi, has been here in the chamber on many occasions. His father, Ray Tisi, was here with a younger brother and sister, Stephanie and Daniel. It's a great family, and I want to thank Justin for serving us all so well.

Interjection: They've all done a great job.

Mr Kormos: I agree, they all have. Unfortunately, because I've got to stick to the time allocation motion, if I can only tout one, I'm going to tout the one from my riding, OK? I'm going to tout Justin Tisi and his family. Justin has done a super job and he should be very proud of himself. His family is proud of him, and when he returns to school, I'm sure he'll have many interesting things to tell his classmates.

Here we are, that's what made me sad, because Jim Bradley mentioned the Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School students who were here. There was a whole whack of them, several classes, grade 10s, 70 grade 10 students and 45 grade 10 French immersion students, so 115 young people here. They got taken on a tour of the assembly. They weren't able to be here for question period because of the busing arrangements they had made. Jim Bradley is right; he and I spoke to them because their families come from both the St Catharines riding and south St Catharines, Niagara Centre.

Both Mr Bradley and I were quite enthusiastic about these young people, these students, being at the seat of Ontario's democracy. We both—I know I always do and I suspect other people do as well—encouraged these young people to become as familiar with Queen's Park, the assembly, as they are with their local city hall or as they are with their local Bell telephone office. This is their Parliament. Even as youngsters, even as people unable to vote, I impressed upon them that they pay taxes too, and they do. Everybody pays taxes. Young people, every time they buy a CD or any other sort of commercial item, they're paying provincial sales tax and GST. We have an obligation of course to them, as we do to their parents, who pay not only PST and GST, but pay income taxes and gasoline taxes and so on.

I was very proud, as I am with any group that comes here, to talk to them about them being here where democracy is practised, then I realized what we were to be

debating this afternoon: another time allocation motion, another closure motion. This is the second one already. We've been sitting for three weeks, and already two time allocation motions.

I think back 11 or 12 years ago now, when I was first elected here, to opposition, and the Liberals of the day started to use time allocation motions. We thought this was just an incredibly brutal and bullying way of forcing legislation through. We were very angry about it and we did everything that the rules let us do to demonstrate that concern about time allocation.

But to be fair, time allocation, when it was imposed then, was imposed after there was lengthy, lengthy—more often than not extremely lengthy—periods of debate. Closure motions were invoked after there were clearly measures being taken by the opposition designed to slow down the progress of a bill, the bell-ringing, all the tactics that opposition had available to itself then. I say that to be fair, because, although we were very concerned about the time allocation or closure motions of the Liberals back in the second Peterson government, I appreciate that they were done by the government after it had been made clear to the government that the opposition were going to be firm in using every exercise, every effort to slow down the progress of a bill.

1610

Then came the NDP government and I saw yet even more usage of time allocation closure motions. I was as concerned about those, with the NDP government, as I was when I was sitting in opposition and it was a Liberal government, and I voted against those time allocations, those closure motions, as well.

We've seen an incredible acceleration in the utilization of closure motions over the last five years now, since 1995. The rules have been compressed to provide and permit fewer and fewer rights for the individual member and certainly fewer and fewer rights for the opposition. When rights are reduced for the individual member and/or the opposition, they're reduced for government backbenchers as well. I believe that.

Maybe my approach or attitude towards being in the government backbench was a little different from the people who are here, I don't know, but surely it's got to be frustrating, especially for some of the newly elected people here—and I give them credit—to have had every intention when they came here, just full of enthusiasm, full of passion for what should be an exciting new challenge in their professional lives and their careers, to have come here with perhaps some sort of fantasy, if you will, about how Parliament works, about the fact that there's going to be debate and exchange of ideas and that policies, once they are introduced, also have an opportunity to be moulded and to be worked by the members of the assembly. My suspicion is that what those people have discovered is that the Parliament is nothing like they anticipated it to be, the whole process, of course, of whipping votes—you are familiar with that, Speaker—in other words, to vote according to the directions of the whip or not vote according to the directions of the whip,

or be there or not be there according to the directions of the whip, or comment or not comment according to the directions of the whip. That's not a very progressive way to nurture a democratic body, a democratic institution.

I was talking to our member from Sault Ste Marie just a few minutes ago and he was telling me that he was driving his parents, I think to the airport, within the last couple of days. They reached down the south end of Bay Street, down near Front Street, and his folks of course are from Sault Ste Marie. The member from Sault Ste Marie told me he was driving his folks, elderly people, and they were of course approached by a squeegee kid, who politely, as he tells it to me, offered to clean the window and was as politely responded to with a decline by the member, at which point the squeegee kid, the squeegee person, said, "Thank you kindly, have a good day."

I've got to tell you, the reason I relate this—it's not directly from the member from Sault Ste Marie but I'm sure he entrusts me to relate that story to the people here—is that that contact with a squeegee person, with a squeegee kid, is more consistent with my experiences than it is with the sort of stuff that we read about from time to time or that we hear about, especially coming from government members when they try to justify Bill 8.

From day one with respect to this issue there has been an effort to link squeegeeing to crime. As well, the attack on squeegee kids is being presented as part of the broken windows theory. In other words, if you don't start apprehending the little things, if you don't start fixing the little panes that are broken, before you know it all the panes will be broken and the windows in the buildings adjacent to that window will be broken as well. I mentioned this the last time I spoke because I think it's a little distorted, the approach that if you don't deal with small crime, big crime then flourishes. That would be fine if there was any relationship between squeegee kids and crime and we haven't seen a single bit of data that would tell us that squeegee kids are inherently criminal or that the presence of squeegee kids leads to bigger and greater crimes. It's sort of like the Reefer Madness stuff out of the 1940s—right?—the Reefer Madness syndrome, which has been disproved over and over again.

All of our observations are that there is no relationship between squeegee kids and crime. There was an interesting comment made last night that I read in Hansard from one of the government backbenchers who indicated in his comments to the Legislature that we had to eradicate squeegee kids because they were bad for tourism—again I'm paraphrasing what he said—that they weren't an attractive sight. It was part of the cleaning up the streets to make them more accommodating to tourists. Again, I haven't seen a single bit of data that suggests to me that tourists are—what would you say?—overwhelmed, disgusted or inclined to leave Toronto by virtue of squeegee kids.

When I leave tonight to get back down to Welland down in Niagara, getting ready to enter the Gardiner, I'm hoping there's a squeegee kid there at the end of Univer-

sity Avenue, please, because before I hit the Gardiner and all the spray and the slush and the muck that's going to be thrown up on me in that two-hour drive back to Welland, I'd like to start with a clean windshield. I'll tell you right now, there's a toonie ready for the squeegee kid who'll do my windows on my little Chevy S-10 when I reach the Gardiner this evening.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): What kind of car is that?

Mr Kormos: It's a five-year-old Chevy S-10 with bumps, dings and scratches and a cracked windshield.

Hon Mr Stockwell: And Corvette wheels.

Mr Kormos: I wish. That's what happens to Corvettes when you don't continue to nurture them with the appropriate pavement; they turn into Chevy S-10s. So be careful. If you've got a Corvette, be careful, be gentle with it, be kind to it before it turns into an S-10.

The S-10 isn't a bad truck. It's got a 4.3-litre V-6 engine, which is much more powerful than the 2.8 in the last one I had, a 1984 Chevy S-10—good torque. I think it's 150 horsepower. It's also because my dealer takes exceptionally good care of me and my truck.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Who's that?

Mr Kormos: David Chev-Olds on Niagara Street in Welland. It's a unionized shop, Canadian Auto Workers, so you never have to worry about the shop working on your car on a unit charge, where of course they've got to rush through as many vehicles as they can or as many jobs as they can in the day to make a decent buck. So David Chev-Olds on Niagara Street in Welland, a unionized shop, excellent service job—the phone number is 735-3690—start at 8 am, and if you're looking for a salesperson, Cathy Robertson can't be beat. Cathy Robertson has purchased every GM car that I've owned since I began driving, and I'm appreciative of it. I've owned some other trucks and a few other GM products from time to time, and once I owned a car made by trade-unionized German workers, but we won't talk about that. Mind you, it had a reasonably good resale value.

I'm looking for the squeegee kid to be there when I hit the Gardiner at 7 or 8 o'clock tonight, because I assume we're not sitting.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): But he's not unionized.

Mr Kormos: He's an entrepreneur. Maybe that's the problem with these people. These people don't like entrepreneurship. They don't. This government thinks small business is some non-union shop with 300 workers earning \$6.85 an hour. That's this government's idea of what small business is. We've talked about this before. You don't understand small business. I grew up in small business. My parents were entrepreneurs. My parents ran a little store, and the kids worked in the store. That's how the family business supported the family. It wasn't a matter of having a payroll of 20 or 30 people. It wasn't even a matter of being incorporated. That's small business. My grandparents were small business people. They ran a little grocery store. Again, that's real small business. That's what's happening out there now.

1620

Do you want to know something? I've often thought about my grandfather with great respect in the context of the current illegal immigrants trying to come into this country, because I've seen where my parents and my grandparents came from—I've been back to that part of Europe; of course, I'm very fortunate and very blessed to have been born here—and I would like to think that my grandfather would have broken the law if he had had to, to bring his family to this country. I suspect that there are more than a few people in this chamber who don't have as strong Canadian roots as the neighbours do, who are inclined to agree with me. I suspect there are people whose ancestry is from any part of the world, whose parents or grandparents probably came here legally, but people who would wish that, had their parents or grandparents had to break the law, they would have. I suspect that's true of more than a few people.

I just put that in the context of the incredible and growing antipathy towards people who basically break the law to get into this country. Some of them, I'm sure, are criminals, but many of them, I'm sure, are just people who are trying to escape from very, beyond difficult economic circumstances in their homelands.

I know that the member from Sault Ste Marie the other day talked about Irish immigrants, and he spoke very much from the heart because his own ancestry is Irish. He betrays that from time to time in some of the phrasing that he uses, in some of the lilt to his speech.

Why aren't we focusing on real criminals? Why aren't we extending our resources to catch people who traffic drugs, to catch people who prey on children and on women? Why aren't we using our police resources to clamp down and get focused investigations on things like home invasions and what I assume—and I only assume this—are the gangs that sponsor them and perpetrate them?

Why is this government so focused on squeegee kids when admittedly there are scarce resources? I'm prepared to acknowledge that. We've got police forces understaffed across this province. People yesterday made reference to having met with their local lobbyist from their local police association. I, of course, met with those police officers who were here at Queen's Park too.

The message they give every single person they lobby is that they need help if they're going to do the job that we've called upon them to do. We can't send cops out there saying, "Go tackle crime," but then say, "No, you're not going to have the resources, you're not going to have the staffing and you're not going to have the weaponry." I'm not just talking about guns. I'm talking about the other tools you need, and in this day and age, probably some very sophisticated tools. It's not fair to the police officer and it's not fair to the communities which expect a modest level of security in their own communities.

Quite frankly, busting a squeegee kid isn't going to prevent a single break-and-enter in any other part of Toronto, isn't going to prevent a single bit of drug-

trafficking, isn't going to stop a single home invasion. Busting a squeegee kid isn't going to stop the telephone fraud and the other frauds that are perpetrated upon seniors on a daily basis. Really, isn't it all about priorities? This government is hell-bent on criminalizing behaviour which is merely annoying and not in itself criminal.

I agree with some of the comments. Some people find it distasteful for a squeegee kid to approach their driver's side window or their windshield to squeegee their car at a stoplight. But there are all sorts of things that happen on our roadways that are annoying. You know it; I know it. There are all sorts of things that are annoying, but we don't send the police out after them. We don't use our scarce policing resources and our criminal justice resources and our correctional resources simply to bust annoying people, throw them in jail and then keep them there for three, four, five or six months. That doesn't solve the problem.

My strong suspicion is that kids are out there squeegeeing as a result of, among other things, the incredibly high level of unemployment that still exists among young people—twice that of adults; twice that of their parents.

My other suspicion about squeegee kids is that they're targets, they're easily targeted. Their appearance tends to be somewhat contrary to what is the mainstream, if there is a mainstream, and I don't know what it is if there is a mainstream. You know what I'm talking about: the clothing style, the earrings, the coloured hair and the hair sticking up because it's got gel in it and stuff. Some people find that a little shocking. Heck, I remember the 1960s. I know I'm not supposed to remember the 1960s, but I remember the 1960s. There were a whole lot of people who were incredibly shocking. Some of them are sitting in this Legislature now.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: But it's true. That's why it's particularly easy to target squeegee kids and to vilify them and to suggest that somehow, by their very nature, they're criminals because they don't live the way other young people live.

Quite frankly, I'm not happy about young people having to go out and do that sort of thing to hustle a few bucks. I'd be much more pleased were there the sorts of jobs that were available when I was their age, where young people could go out and work, notwithstanding for lower wages than full-time workers were making or for lower wages than what an adult worker might make. When I was a teenager, those jobs were available, and they were sufficiently available that if you didn't like your job you could quit it and go down the road and get another one. The fact is that isn't the reality of Ontario any more.

One of the problems young people have when they're out there looking for jobs is that the fast-food jobs, the retail sales jobs, those jobs that young people historically used to work at as students part time and on weekends and during the summer months, are now being worked at by their parents because their parents have lost their jobs in factories and as a result of corporate restructuring, like

the Bell telephone workers and like the UCAR workers in Welland and like auto workers, who have been in constant fluctuating cycles of booms and valleys.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: That's right. The jobs that young people historically used to work at are now being done by their parents, and they're being done two and three jobs at a time.

There's not a single indication by this government to justify their criminalization of mere squeegeeing; it has all been anecdotal. If a car has been scratched or a windshield wiper has been torn off, let the Criminal Code charges be laid. It's as simple as that. I can hear the argument already: "How would we catch them?" Precisely the point. Are you going to have cops doing squeegee undercover, videotapes and cameras and people wired for sound? I've seen those movies. It's absurd.

Are you going to have cops spend the whole day circling around the block hoping to get confronted by a squeegee kid? They may be squeegee kids, but they're not dummies. As soon as they see that 1998 Ford Victoria stripped down with no chrome and the solid black roof, they're going to have half of an idea that's a cop in there. They're going to be hard-pressed to go rushing up saying, "Please." It's more like they're going to say, "Constable, are you looking for directions?" I mean, come on. It's not going to end it. There will be some arrests, but then the games will start, because there are some good lawyers out there who have already indicated what so many of us feel in this Legislature: that the law in fact won't even survive constitutional tests.

I raised that the other time I spoke to this. I talked about the extortion sections of the Criminal Code of Canada. I talked about extortion and how the aggressive panhandling section, "aggressive manner" definition, interestingly seems to parallel the basic prerequisite for an extortion charge. Again, it's up to lawyers. I'm not suggesting that legislators should automatically use constitutionality as a reason for not passing a law, because that can be something of a cop-out. I felt this as a city councillor many years ago, as well. Legislators shouldn't blatantly breach the Constitution, but their job is to pass laws. It's the court's job to determine whether or not those laws are constitutionally valid. I accept that and I understand that and I live with that. But it is something to be called upon to pass a law for something which is merely annoying and not in itself criminal, to pass a law to say all of a sudden, "We don't want squeegee kids at our intersections."

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: He wants to say something. Go ahead.

Mr Mazzilli: Intimidate.

1630

Mr Kormos: OK, who are intimidated. A door-to-door salesperson is intimidating if you're not in the right frame of mind; a telephone solicitor. Talk about annoying, these clowns with the telephone soliciting companies use the computerized dialling and you get this electronic voice. You want to bust somebody? Go bust them,

because they intrude right into your own home, and they inevitably do it at suppertime. You get a phony canned electronic voice trying to peddle something to you, a set of free steak knives, my goodness. And they're persistent, because computers are insensitive to the most rude interjections. Computers don't respond to the most Anglo-Saxonish of responses.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order.

Mr Kormos: What was I doing, Speaker? Can I go now? I don't know, something upset the Speaker.

The member for Sault Ste Marie is here now. You'll recall, Speaker, I was telling you what he had to say to me about his folks encountering squeegeers.

I don't want to see police resources out there to bust squeegee kids, and inevitably that's what they'll be doing. You talk about fines, and one of the government backbenchers last night said, "We're not going to jail them, because they have the choice to pay fines." They're not going to pay the fines. That's why they're out there squeegeeing. If they could afford the sort of fines you want to impose on them, they wouldn't be squeegeeing. So they're going to go to jail.

Interjection: Relax, Peter.

Mr Kormos: I wish I could relax about this, but I'm afraid this is just so repugnant a proposition. You're saying it's a big deal. It probably isn't a big deal, because it probably impacts on, at the end of the day, but a few hundred people. But it says something about our community and about our society. We want to criminalize people who are out there hustling to make a couple of bucks. That's the long and short of it. They're trying to make a couple of bucks. Are they aggressive sometimes? I'm talking about squeegees now. Of course they are. That's how you market services. That's how you get out there and persuade people to buy your product. Salespeople are pushy. That's how you sell.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It's the sizzle on the steak.

Mr Kormos: It's the sizzle on the steak, it's the hustle.

These kids are being told, "Stop hustling." These kids are being told, "Go on the dole." These kids, with enough gumption and wherewithal, are being told: "Stop doing what you're doing. Go on the dole." These are kids who are trying to make the best out of what are probably some pretty miserable lives.

I had some fun the other night just reflecting how cops are going to go out. The other image that comes to mind is you have a cop and he's got a squeegee kid, he's got the gun on the squeegee kid, he says, "Drop your squeegee, kid, drop it now." The most absurd scenarios are going to result as a result of this legislation.

But I'll tell you, there are going to be some great court cases, there are going to be some incredible court cases. I'm looking forward to some of the litigation that flows from this legislation as creative lawyers launch defences for squeegee kids and attacks on this legislation. There are going to be some incredible cross-examinations of police officers and other crown witnesses. What are we

doing sending crown witnesses into court when they should be pursuing their daily jobs?

Secondly, the panhandling.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Secondly? You've been speaking for 40 minutes.

Mr Kormos: I understand. Speaker, the government backbenchers are putting me under pressure. I've only got 13 minutes left to say everything I wanted to say about this legislation, because this is it. Next time this bill is called there will be no more debate. All those members who haven't had an opportunity to put their views on the record are going to be denied that by virtue of this motion today.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'm sorry.

Mr Kormos: "Sorry," you say. Don't apologize to us; apologize to the people of Ontario for breaking down some very basic, fundamental bastions of democracy in this parliamentary system.

Mr Tilson: I am apologizing to you.

Mr Kormos: Apologize to the people, because this bill, after six o'clock this afternoon, will never, ever again be debated. It's going to go to committee, and the Chair of committee, with the domination of government members on that committee, will determine when and where and how committee meetings are held—nothing new. It's the same heavy-handed, bootstrap, brown-shirted, blackshirted, white-shirted style that has been used by this government from their first days here in 1995. That's what it is. It's a complete denial of the right to debate and the right to dissent and the right—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair recognizes the member for Mississauga Centre.

Hon Mr Sampson: Thank you, Speaker. I was listening very attentively to Mr Kormos's speech and I believe he said things in the last few minutes that are unparliamentary and I'd ask him to withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker: I didn't catch the term, but if the member from Niagara Centre said something that is unparliamentary I'd ask him to withdraw.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Essentially what the point of order that the member from Mississauga was dwelling on is that the member from Niagara Centre pointed out that we're brownshirts—

The Deputy Speaker: No. I just wanted to clear up something with the member from Etobicoke North, if he would like to listen. Indeed, I'm going to do it whether he wants to listen or not. I don't allow debate on points of order so that is out of order.

The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: You know what? The government backbenchers are probably right. I probably did say something unparliamentary. I suspect they're right. That's why I apologized and withdrew it, without hesitation, because I've been showing great restraint. If they think I said something unparliamentary about them, they ought to know what I've been thinking about them for the last five

and a half years. What I've said about you is nothing compared to what I think about you. My thoughts are extremely unparliamentary, but—

Remarks in German.

That is the truest maxim that could ever be said about humankind.

Even in the shadow of this government, where the poorest people are going to be busted and sent to jail, where panhandlers—as I told you the other day, I'm not as well travelled as some of you are, but the only places I've been to so far in my life where panhandlers are swept off the street and busted are totalitarian countries. I've been to some of those countries and so have you.

I've just got some messages here. This is something I can deal with later, because I've only got nine minutes left. Go ahead, Mr Marchese, help me with those if you can.

1640

I'll go on to the panhandling. Panhandling and begging is a manifestation of poverty. Get it? It's not a difficult one. It's a manifestation of poverty. Nobody goes out there, cup out or hand out, for what amounts to literal spare change unless they have to. As I said the other day, do I find panhandlers an inconvenience? Only to the extent where I haven't enough spare change. I would put to people like you—

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): Why do they come here from New York?

Mr Kormos: The nice thing about Americans is they can give US money, which is worth an extra 50% more than ours is. A buck from an American tourist is worth more than a toonie from you or me.

We have an increasing number of panhandlers on the streets of Toronto, and increasingly on the streets of other communities. Just as there's vilification of squeegee kids by virtue of the mythology of squeegeeing, I want to know who presented the facts that would give rise to concern in Toronto about panhandlers around queues waiting for a bus. As I told you the other night, if you're trying to protect people from unsafe environments, the safest place to be panhandled, if you're actually fearful of the panhandler, is when other people are around. At a bus queue would be the best place to permit panhandling. The safest place to be panhandled is in a lit area if, indeed, you're frightened about what the panhandler may do to you. The safest place to be panhandled is at a well-lit ATM area, where inevitably there are security cameras.

We spoke about panhandling while you're intoxicated by alcohol or drugs. Do you understand that for so many of those people they've got to be, before they can get out there and hit those streets? So many of those people were like so many of the people in here: they had families; they had mothers and fathers; they had daughters and sons; they had spouses, wives and husbands. Please don't for a minute think they're finding any great personal dignity in being out there holding out a cup or a cap or a hand. The myth of the panhandler who dies and leaves an

estate worth \$2 million—oh yeah, give me a break; I've heard that one too. That's all they are, is myths.

Last time I spoke I asked you to please, next time you're downtown, walking back to your apartment or to lunch or dinner, wherever it is, talk to some of those panhandlers. Rather than turning your eye to avoid eye contact, try making some eye contact. If you're so inclined, through whatever motive, to drop a loonie into their cup, why don't you look into their eyes while you do it and wish them well and make some human contact with a small but obviously a visible population of people, who are on the very, very margins of our society?

Other cultures have classes, stratification. In some cultures there are classes that are the untouchables. We would tend to condemn that sort of culture which would create a class of untouchables, yet we practise it ourselves. Instead of acknowledging and understanding that panhandlers are out there as an act of desperation, go to some of the crummy rooms that they have to rent and live in, that they rent by the day or by the week only as a result of what they can accumulate by way of spare change out there panhandling. Take a walk through some of the incredibly stinky, dirty, condemnable buildings that landlords are renting to these people and understand that their lives aren't particularly pleasant ones.

You're suggesting you're going to solve the problem by putting them in jail. Why don't you solve the problem by making sure that people in those positions have sufficient benefits and resources available to them so they can live in decent, clean housing? You talk to the people out there who are panhandling, who are capable and willing to work, who indicate to you very clearly that after one or two days out on the street it's not exactly a matter of sprucing up to go in for a job interview. You look bad; you smell bad; you haven't slept well; you haven't shaved; you haven't bathed. So the old "Go get a job" is pretty trite advice, because they're not likely to be able to just walk in, present their resumé and be considered along with the other job applicants.

These are people our health care system has failed and lost. These are people who have been sent out onto the streets because of declining health care dollars and because of a complete absence of any community-based health care system. These are people who die lonely, miserable, cruel, tortured deaths on top of subway grates during the coldest days of winter. These are people who—yeah, do they use the parks for some personal toilet facilities? I suspect they do, because when you don't have a home and when you're barred at the door to the restaurant when the owner, for whatever reason, says no, it's for customers only, you've got to use whatever facilities are available to you.

Just walk a mile in their shoes, if only in your mind, and understand why some of them might feel compelled out of desperation to do more than sit there passively with their hand out, why some of them might be inclined to ask more than once, why some of them might have sufficient left of their own personalities to feel offended when well-dressed middle-class passersby just walk by

without even making eye contact, without even saying "No, sir" or "No, ma'am" when they make a request. Think about the incredible attack on dignity that that is, and that is performed by people like you, people like us, on a daily basis, the big wide circle around the panhandler and the avoidance of eye contact, not even enough to acknowledge them as a human being. You'd be more inclined to say "Hi, pooch" to a dog that was on the street than you are to these people.

You treat these people as if they were somehow alien and foreign, but they're not. They have family histories; they have career histories. They've got stories that could be told about their lives too. At some point in their lives they probably had hope left, but at another point in their lives that hope was taken away from them, and they were never given a chance to reclaim any active role in our community either societally or economically.

You want to jail these people. The rationale was put forth by a government backbencher somewhat clearly last night when he said it was all about tourism and making our streets sort of more presentable. Is this part of the Olympics bid?

Some government that rather than addressing poverty and resolving it wants to stamp out, eradicate, the evidence of it. Sweep the streets clean. Send them somewhere else, New York City style, Mayor Giuliani. Use army barracks and just throw them in there as if they were in concentration camps.

I've been to those programs in New York City and I've seen what's done, and it's a complete denial of any personal dignity of the people who are subject to those programs or of any sense of their civil rights or civil liberties as citizens, as members of our community.

I think you get the message that I am not going to be supporting this closure motion. I think there's a heck of a lot more that should be said about this bill before it's rammed through this Legislature, and I think you can suspect that my colleagues and I will not be supporting this bill. I say to you: Such a modest piece of legislation, but shame on you for such a denial of human dignity to so many—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I again rise to speak to a motion to permit this Legislature to vote on a very important bill presented by the Attorney General, and that is an Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways.

1650

It's unfortunate that we, the government, have to take this step in order to have this bill democratically voted on in this House, but the opposition do not wish it to come to a vote. I can understand the third party. The third party has consistently denied any rights for victims or any bills or laws that might assist the innocent victims in our society. I am more surprised, however, with the Liberals,

the opposition, because at times they've indicated that they also had some concern with the victims of our society.

But as a crime commission, I remember we did a letter not just to our caucus but of course to all members of this House inviting them to invite us into their ridings so we could hear the concerns of their constituents. I must say we received absolutely no invitations except from the member from Davenport, who forms part of the official opposition. He was the only member of the opposition who invited us into his riding, and at that time we heard the concerns and the fears of his constituents regarding crime and disorder on their streets, including squeegee people.

This bill, when and if passed, I believe will permit us to take back our streets from the disorder that is presently going on. I'd like to take this opportunity, as I've already spoken to Bill 8, to discuss certain sections and parts of the bill about which there have been questions raised.

For instance, Bill 8 is aimed at aggressive solicitation and solicitation in various captive audience situations. The legislation of course is aimed at ensuring the safe and secure use of the sidewalks, streets and other public places by us and our families. Solicitation, however, that is courteous and does not occur in captive audience situations, including the roadway, is not—and I repeat not—targeted by this legislation.

Most charitable activities are likely to fit this description. The Safe Streets Act uses the Highway Traffic Act definition of "roadway," which refers to the part of the street or highway used for vehicular traffic but not the shoulder or the sidewalk. Charitable activity that does not occur on the roadway, the paved portion, would not be affected by the legislation so long as it is not aggressive and does not fall within the other captive audience situations.

It is expected that many charities would be operating in compliance with the law; for instance, charitable car washes which conduct their activities from the side of the road and divert cars that wish to participate off the roadway. Charities often work with the police and local authorities to carry out their efforts in public places safely and in accordance with the law. Charities and their volunteers should be encouraged to continue their good work.

The government appreciates the valuable work conducted by charities, and I certainly in the riding of Cambridge appreciate the many volunteers who work so hard in regard to charitable aspects in our riding.

The police would have a range of options. In addition to the power to arrest, they could, when they encounter someone engaging in an offence under the proposed Safe Streets Act, choose the appropriate tool in the circumstances. They could, for instance, give a warning, advise that the conduct may be an offence and that future infractions could result in a charge. They could just ticket the offender. They could summons the offender to attend at court. They could also, as an alternative, contact fam-

ily and children's services if the person is under 16 years of age.

They could, of course, contact the social service or psychiatric treatment agencies to deal with the issue if the person is an emotionally disturbed person. If the person is mentally ill, they could, as with any existing provincial offences, provide alternative dispositions. These would include police options to provide linkages with the mental health system, intervention programs and courts aimed at ensuring the mentally ill are treated fairly and receive the services they need.

For example, in the city of Toronto the government has initiated a special mental health court, 102 court, which combines mental health workers, psychiatrists, judges, duty counsel and crown attorneys who work together to find the best result for any particular citizen. This model has proven most effective in the year that it has been operating.

In addition to the safe streets provisions for fines for first offences and imprisonment for repeat offences, sentences can include probationary orders for the first or subsequent offences. Probation orders can include a number of conditions, not repeating the offence being one, or could provide for community service or restitution or participation in municipal training programs. Where the offender is willing, probation can also include terms requiring the offender to undergo certain treatments, such as alcohol or drug counselling. There are many ways to help the needy in our society.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is reviewing the mental health legislation with a view to removing barriers that stand in the way of families, police and social workers to ensure people posing a danger to themselves or others get the care they need. This is consistent with our government's Blueprint. The Ministry of Health Care has also established 24 assertive community treatment teams to provide services for people who are severely mentally ill and are living independently in the community.

The government has also allocated \$45 million over three years for housing supports and spaces for people with mental illness and special needs. The Minister of Health announced the first phase on October 7, in which \$24 million will immediately be provided for capital and ongoing operating grants to agencies to develop supportive housing for people with serious mental illnesses: 800 housing units in Toronto, 100 in Ottawa and 100 in Hamilton.

As with any provincial offence, police and the courts would have a number of options when dealing with offences under the Safe Streets Act. These would include probation orders to help address the underlying causes. Specific legislative provisions under the Safe Streets Act are not necessary to permit for probation, as probation is permitted by the Provincial Offences Act. Justices and prosecutors are well aware of the availability of probation orders to address appropriate situations of need by provincial offenders.

I am pleased that we are proceeding as quickly as possible to pass this very important bill. This is a bill that has been requested by the chief of police of the city of Toronto, by the mayor of the city of Toronto and by many other municipal officials and citizens right across this province who want to take our streets back for the general public so that we and our families can walk and drive in safety and without apprehension.

1700

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I'd like the people of Ontario to note that this is a closure motion, which means that we've only have two hours and a few minutes to debate this item. Any time that there is closure imposed, it takes away from a principle of democracy. We know that this government in the last four years has used more closure motions than any government in the last 127 years. We're debating this bill and we're objecting to this closure motion.

The bill, of course, speaks to the squeegee issue. What we object to here is the priority of the Tory government. They're focusing on squeegees over stretchers and schools. Really it's an attempt to distract Ontarians from the real issues.

I was really surprised when the Attorney General stood up today, when he made the introduction. He said, "We have some other programs in place that squeegee kids could enter in order to get out of their lives of squeegeeing." He'd indicated that there was enough housing available for them if they wanted to get out of the parks. At least that's what I took from his introduction of this bill. I was somewhat confused about his statement.

As I remember, any night in Toronto in the winter-time, there are over 8,000 hostel spaces, which is not sufficient for people who are on the streets—8,000 and more. At any time, if a squeegee person wants to get into this housing, he has to line up and find a space. On many a night, the spaces are all full—not a few of them, all of them.

You will remember last year when a person who was sleeping right in front of my window at this Legislature died on a heating grid. My office was on the first floor. The Premier's office was on the fourth floor. It was easy to see. Anybody walking by could see there were always two people sleeping on the grate, and on that very day when that person died—and of course after that happened you had a big kerfuffle and people were showing their concern. Everyone showed up, including the Premier himself. I can remember that I'd made some phone calls that very day. I wanted to find out if there was indeed a space available that night for that person sleeping on that heating grate. Was there space available in the hostel system? Could he have gone that night and slept there? What I found out was that the system was full. The hostels were all full. He couldn't have gone there to sleep even if he wanted to.

Why am I bringing up this example? I'm bringing it up because I want to speak to the real issues of this province. One of them is housing, but let's slip the real

problems and issues of this province under the carpet and let's talk about squeegeeing, because that is what's called a hot button. It's been identified as a hot button by the whiz kids in the Premier's office. Just push that hot button and you get some responses out there, find out what the people really think. In the meantime, we have people who don't have housing. We have people literally dying who can't get into the hostel system. That's a disgrace for the city of Toronto.

What about the issue of health care? Is that also important? I can remember in 1999, when all of the emergency wards in the west end of Toronto—all of them, all nine hospitals—were closed. If you had a heart attack, you called 911, you got into an emergency vehicle and you had to wait, literally, to get into the hospital. You couldn't get in there. They had to maintain a life support system outside in the van. You couldn't get in there because it was closed. Unacceptable. Totally unacceptable.

Has the system improved? Has it really improved? Sure, we're spending the money at it, but I know for sure that in 1999 all of the hospitals in Toronto were closed; you couldn't get in. That's where we have to spend our money.

Isn't that more important, to use the resources of the province, than going after squeegee kids? Sure, it's an issue, but it shouldn't be a political football, and that's what this has become, a political football, easy to kick around and seemingly easy to solve—I say "seemingly" with a caution—because it sounds good if we do something about it. Let's pass a bill, right here, Bill 8. Let's pass it. Give the cops the power and the problem is over. No. There are internal problems with this bill, as previous speakers have indicated, which will not make it fly.

I want to first of all point out, before I get into the details of it, what some of the real issues are that this government should be addressing. Has there been a decision made by this government, has there been a promise made by this government to ensure that all the emergency wards are going to be open? I would hope so. I put my finger up. I want to find out if the promise has been made and if the promise is going to be broken. You make many promises, and you are proud of saying, "Yes, a promise made and a promise kept." On this side of the House we can tell you, a promise made and a promise not kept. The reason I say this is because, check the emergency wards and check our health care system.

School closures: You should be ashamed to create a funding formula that makes people get on the street with their children to demonstrate against it because they can't get your ear. Your ears were closed. "I hear nothing, I see nothing and I speak nothing," until there was such a firestorm out there of kids and parents in our schools that they marched in the streets, marched in front of the Premier's office, marched in front of the Legislature, marched in front of the schools.

That problem isn't solved yet today, because the city of Toronto school board made a decision not too long ago to close 10 schools. Why is that? They were forced

into it by you. They were forced into it by the Conservative government. Why? Because you made a decision to introduce a funding formula which had nothing to do with programming and real education. Let me repeat: That funding formula had nothing to do with education or with programming. It had to do with buildings and square footage. It had to do with thickness of walls and spaces.

The schools, as you know, are the heart of the community. They are the hearts of your communities as well, and these hearts were ripped out, 10 of them in the city of Toronto; 10 hearts ripped out from the community. These schools are more than centres of education. These schools are daycare centres. These schools have programs for parks and recreation. These schools are music institutions. These schools belong to communities. These schools are part and parcel of what we say is our right to a quality of life as Canadians, and they ripped out 10 of them in the city of Toronto and many more in Ontario.

Not only that, this very month the city of Toronto school board is going to make another announcement. Do you know what? They are being forced by you to take 10 more hearts and cut them out, so that we'll have 20 of them being cut out in the city of Toronto, 20 schools being closed.

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: Oh yes, of course, they don't want to hear about that. They don't want to have that accusatory finger placed on their chests because they are really legitimately responsible for this abomination against the education system. Those are some of the real issues that we should be addressing in this Legislature. Have we done that? I don't think so.

1710

What about the environment? Even the very ministry is being decimated as I speak, reduced by millions of dollars. We know the figures. In the city of Toronto alone, 800 people are going to die this year because of air pollution. Did you know that? We had 800 die last year. Has the air quality improved in the city of Toronto? No. Has the Minister of the Environment done anything about this? No. We still have coal-burning plants, the worst we can do.

Can we then say to the United States: "Listen, you're doing something wrong. Don't send us your smog from Pennsylvania. Don't send us your smog from your coal-burning plants because you are really decimating Toronto, you are really pushing your air into the city of Toronto. Don't do that; please, don't. Don't have coal-burning plants."

How can we possibly say that? How can the kettle call the pot black? We're doing it ourselves. Those are the real issues of Torontonians that we speak of right here. Those are issues you should be addressing. Stop this terrible bad air, because it's literally killing our residents. That's the environment, and there are many more issues in the environment we should be addressing right now, except we won't have time.

What about this issue of taxes? We should be talking about taxes too. That's another issue.

What about the very speech that was made a few minutes ago here? It was: "We've done something about mental care institutions. We've spent some money so that squeegee kids, some of them who are emotionally unbalanced, can access some of these institutions."

I don't think so. I represent the area of Parkdale and I know what has become of it. I know that the recidivism rate was over 70% and that was the revolving door. What did we do with mentally ill people going into the system? There wasn't a bed available for them, because there was no money. You cut that out. They entered the institution, they were literally kicked out within a day or two, given some pills and told: "Please go. I don't think we have homes for you, but just go out. You have to look after yourself." That's what we're talking about when we say "revolving door policy." That's what we're talking about when we say "recidivism rate," meaning people are coming back. They're not being treated. You've taken them in as mentally ill persons, you're treating them for a day or less or not at all and you're pushing them out as soon as you possibly can. They're out on the street, they're going to the hospital without walls—our communities. They're going there and finding no accommodation. And you're saying that's not the issue? That's an issue.

If we want to talk about the crime of squeegee kids, let's talk about the crime in our communities. Why can't we get the hookers and the pimps and the drug dealers off the streets? Have we not given enough information and resources to our police department to do that? Are we not in a position to get rid of the prostitutes on our street corners? We can't do that. And we are concerned with squeegee kids? Is it not even more important not to have your children go by the hookers and their pimps and their drug dealers on a daily basis and no resources? Ha, ha.

I remember what happened in our own area not too long ago. We couldn't handle them; it's was as simple as that. The police said: "You know what, Mr Ruprecht? We can't handle it because we've got no resources. We have no money. Give us the money and give us the resources and we might just do something about it."

You are saying, "We'll give you some money but the money is to be used for something else." Give our police the resources, we'll do something about it, and not this particular legislation.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for letting me carry on for a while.

I just want to say that you have your priorities in the wrong spot. I hope that you will reconsider.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On this time allocation motion on Bill 8, it is certainly my pleasure to follow the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, Mr Martiniuk. He comes with some experience and some credibility, so I think it is a privilege to follow him. He's also the parliamentary assistant to native affairs. He has covered most of the pertinent issues with respect to this bill.

We've had many hours of debate in this House on the issue, and from my listening to it neither the Liberal

Party nor the NDP have a position on community safety. Why would I say that in the context of this motion? Recently, each of the members here went through an election, and I'm looking at the position of the NDP. Their position paper says, "Who is clearly on the side of Ontario's working families and unions?"—oh, pardon me; it's just "working families."

There wasn't mention in here, and that's disappointing to see, because during the most recent election—and I should out of respect, if I may, take a moment, with your indulgence, to mention that during the election in June 1999 there were five candidates, including myself. Just for the record I would like to read it out. This isn't in any way arrogant, but it's to show respect, that there's a process here: Jacinthe Millaire, from the Natural Law Party, got 0.5% of the vote, 242 votes; Gail Thompson, from the Green Party—actually quite an interesting candidate—got 1% of the vote, at 467; Jim Morrison, from the NDP, certainly had a message—he was clearly on the side of trying to get elected, that's for sure—and he had 4,235 votes, at 9.2% of the vote; and Garry Minnie, a very nice gentleman about my age—I didn't say younger or older; very much my vintage—a former teacher and a very nice fellow, received 32% of the vote. It's the first time ever in the new riding of Durham that the Liberal Party came second, so clearly, you might say the target of strategic voting worked there. He got just over 14,000 votes. Respectfully, we worked hard and had a great team of people—I want to thank those people—and we got about 58%, with 26,000. It was encouraging.

What I heard during the election was the issues. Of course, health care was important, education, and we've committed 20% more funding. I also heard about the importance of safety in our communities, and you would know that in my riding of Durham—the fastest-growing area in all of Canada, it has been brought to my attention most recently—new suburban neighbourhoods and new families want to feel secure in the parks and neighbourhood areas, in arenas and at schools.

What we're seeing on television and in the media is quite the opposite. For the opposition and third party to ignore the reality, that it's the thin edge of the wedge—where do you start addressing aggressive panhandling or aggressive street activity, swarming and those kinds of things? You've got to start with the law. You can't just ignore—members from the other side, certainly the Liberals, right now are trumpeting their position, which is no position on crime.

The Young Offenders Act is clearly their statement about where they're soft on crime. It disappoints me, and I know it disappoints the people in my riding. I spent some time during the election in Blackstock, in Bond Head, of course in Bowmanville—I reside just outside Bowmanville, a wonderful rapidly growing town with all the urban pressures—and in Columbus and Enniskillen, to name but five. I think Sean Conway uses that line, and I'm trying to learn as I go here. I'm just using that out of respect for Sean Conway, "to name but five." But there's Maple Grove, Mitchell Corners, Mount Carmel, Newton-

ville and Newcastle, to name but five more. They all supported that we need safe communities.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): What about Newtonville?

Mr O'Toole: Newtonville, of course, and Welcome, which is in Mr Galt's riding. It's called Welcome, but it really means "Welcome to Durham," which is my riding. I think that's what the sign on the 401 is implying. The member from Northumberland, don't take exception to that, because I know you represent those constituents very well. Every day I turn on the television, you're speaking.

1720

What other kinds of indications of support for this legislation am I aware of? Dave Leonhardt from the Canadian Automobile Association—four million members in Canada—has come out with a press release dated November 15, saying, "Safe streets, not squeegee kids." They support this legislation.

I look further. I look beyond just Toronto, the Toronto-centred thinking, and I've got to start with Mayor Lastman, who clearly approached our Premier, who's in the House tonight. He's the only leader in the House tonight. You're not supposed to point that out, but a few brownie points here and there for me don't hurt. But he is here, and he's always here, always on the job. Mayor Lastman must have spoken to our Premier—

Interjection: And he's up to the job.

Mr O'Toole: He's up to the job, because we do what we promise, and clearly safe communities—but Police Chief David Boothby clearly—

Mr Agostino: On a point of order—

Interjections.

Mr Agostino:—suck up to the Premier. That's an embarrassing opportunity—

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Dominic. It really didn't cross my mind, but now that you mention it. I know it has crossed your mind. Actually, you have such weak leadership that I think there are several people looking for it.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Seven people looking for it. We won't go through that.

But what does Dalton McGuinty actually think of this issue? In the National Post on February 9—I think this must have been written for him, because he usually doesn't have a position. Their position is: You stick your finger up in the wind and whichever way the wind's blowing. "Poverty breeds despair, despair breeds crime." This is the fundamental theme in Bill 8, which Minister Flaherty introduced on November 2, to first of all set the stage that crime and safety are absolutely critical. We've got to have safe communities. That's central to our policy.

Also, this week we had the Ontario police association, and I want to thank them for their delegations. They actually brought to our attention that this bill was being

supported by Police Chief David Boothby. I can't speak for our police chief, Kevin McAlpine, but I'm confident that he supports safe communities, and Bill 8 is in that direction. I can also tell members that I met with the Ontario police association president, Terry Ryan. He's very supportive of the actions of this government. Clearly, we're on the side of the victim and we're actually tough on crime. There's no question about it. It doesn't pay to be in crime in Ontario with Premier Mike Harris at the helm—who's, by the way, still here.

There are other people—Tom Bell, also a member of the police association, and Mark McConkey. I can tell you that Mark McConkey is a person who knows firsthand the price of violence in our streets. He sustained an injury while on duty not too many years ago. In this context, bringing back respect and dignity in our communities, in our schools, in our streets is exactly something the people of Ontario want. They demand it. It's the courage of strong leadership, able to make those tough decisions; that explains why we're in government and why the opposition are languishing in the outbacks of popular support.

I can only say that I'm so proud to speak, as I said earlier, following the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, Mr Martiniuk. The Attorney General's remarks today were absolutely—I support, almost to the word, almost to the syllable, everything he said. In fact, I may repeat much of what he said. But the Safe Streets Act that was introduced November 2 has had wide discussion.

As I said earlier, I've heard that the opposition and third party don't support it. I take that as they don't support, in a general sense, any movement by this government to address the issues of safety in our communities.

Representing the people from Hampton, Kendal, Leskard and Manchester, to name but four, I would say with confidence that I'll be supporting this bill. It's my privilege to wrap up by saying, in conclusion, I've been forced to share my time with the member from Northumberland.

Mr Agostino: I'm not vying to get into cabinet or to cross the floor, so I probably won't be as kind to the Premier as my colleague across the floor.

This is an interesting debate. It's unfortunate the government has chosen to cut short this debate, because philosophically it really goes to the heart of how one political party or government of the day chooses to handle what is really a social problem and tries to criminalize poverty, tries to criminalize homelessness in this province, tries to criminalize the fact that people are marginalized.

They really talk tough on squeegee kids. There's a real myth here. The member across the floor went on and on about how they're concerned about safe streets and how tough they are on criminals because they're beating up on these squeegee kids, the big, tough squeegee kids they're going to come down on. What he failed to tell you—and I'm sure he would have told you if he had more time—is that there are fewer police officers on the streets today in

this province than there were when this government took office. I'm sure my colleague forgot to tell you that.

He forgot to tell you that his government opposes gun control and the gun registry. They're spending millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to go to court and challenge the federal government's gun control law. These are the tough, law-and-order guys. These are the guys who believe that they own, have a monopoly on law and order. This is the same party that believes it's acceptable for guns to be in the hands of people across this province. They want to turn this province into another Florida, where literally every citizen can carry a gun. That is the reality. This government opposes gun control and gun registry and is spending taxpayers' dollars to go to court to challenge this. We know what guns can do. We know the correlation between ownership of guns and murder and violence in American cities. But they don't seem to understand it.

This is the government that talks about safety and kids but last year passed legislation that allows 11-year-old children to carry guns and go hunting. This is the government that put handguns in the hands of 11-year-olds and thought that was acceptable.

This is the government which on Monday, in front of a gallery full of police officers, announced with great fanfare that they were going to bring something in, and rightly so—and we agree with that legislation, except we haven't seen it—to go after individuals who cause police chases and speed away from police. We said to you on Monday, "We're going to support that." It's the right thing to do. But we're sitting here and there's no legislation, of course.

Talk about mixed up priorities. Here we have a government that, first of all, has fewer cops on the streets, opposes gun control, allows 11-year-old kids to go hunting and believes that this legislation is more important than legislation that would put away for life people who cause police chases and who risk the lives of police officers and innocent citizens. They think this is more important. Why don't you ask most Ontarians if they believe that dealing with 200 or 300 squeegee kids in downtown Toronto is a bigger issue than dealing with these criminals who cause police chases, cause speeding and end up killing police officers and citizens who are innocent? Do you not think that's a priority?

Why isn't that bill here? Why is this bill here before that one? Talk about mixed up, screwed up priorities on the part of this government, and you talk the talk on law and order. This is nothing more than a political hot button. This is nothing more than what your pollsters are telling you to do. You talk about putting your finger in the wind. The reality is, every single bill, every single piece of legislation you bring in is brought in after your pollsters tell you what to do. This is a government by polling, a government of hot buttons.

I say to the Premier, who is here today, if you're serious about crime, if you're serious about safer streets, add more cops to our streets, drop the opposition to gun control across this province, revoke the legislation that

allows 11-year-old kids to carry guns and bring in immediately the legislation that would punish people who cause police chases. Those are the things you can do.

1730

Squeegee kids are a problem; they're not a menace. They're simply a symptom of bigger problems that we have in society in dealing with people who are poor, are marginalized and need our help. Those people need help; they don't need to be handcuffed and put into jail. They need government programs, government assistance, a hand up, not a kick in the head. What this is going to do is simply put a cute little cosmetic Band-Aid on a much bigger problem.

I say to this government, get your priorities in order. If you're serious about—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Galt: It's certainly a pleasure to be able to respond. It's interesting to note the excellent presentations we've already heard from the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, but particularly from the member for Durham—very entertaining. Mr Speaker, you can rest assured that he has unanimous support from all of the party leaders present in the House this afternoon.

As we look at this time allocation motion for Bill 8, I listened very attentively to the member for St Catharines earlier this afternoon. The member for St Catharines was expressing great concern for some of the backbenchers and great concern for some of the ministers in this House. I'd like to respond to that because I understand a person by the name of Don Guy seems to be running the Liberal Party. I have no idea who this Guy is, but I understand he has something to do with Polara, a vice-president or something. I understand he was the provincial campaign manager for the provincial Liberals, but now I understand he's really the boss of the Liberal Party. Dalton is sort of the front person who's out there, just the front person, and really if you're not on Don Guy's list or not a loyalist to Don Guy, you don't rate.

I'm concerned for the member for St Catharines, that if he isn't a loyalist to Don Guy—and I hear a rumour that he isn't—he may end up not being in the front row. I enjoy his smiling face and his presentation, but if he ends up in the back row because he isn't a loyalist, that's most unfortunate.

Dalton should be very concerned about the upcoming leadership—

Mr Agostino: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: The member has continued to speak about an individual who is not in this House, who is not able to stand in this House and defend himself. I think it is inappropriate, I think it is wrong, and I do not think he should be attacking the integrity of individuals who cannot be here to defend themselves. By talking about Mr Guy, I really believe he has stepped over the line. I would ask you to rule him out of order and to—

The Deputy Speaker: It would seem to me that if we could only talk about people who are in this House, we would have very little topic matter.

The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for that brilliant ruling. It's interesting as we talk about this particular individual, the boss of the Liberal Party. I understand there's an upcoming leadership campaign and there's a Sandra Pupatello plan, better known as the "dump Dalton" plan. There's a lot of knives out behind this poor leader. Not only are the knives behind him, but I understand there's a knife out beside him. I think he's the best ally we have, and I just hope, for Dalton's sake, that he can survive.

We need Dalton here in the House as Leader of the Opposition. But I understand he's sort of messing up. He's not supporting one of his own backbenchers for president of the party; rather, he's supporting another individual by the name of Greg Sorbara. I think that's rather unfortunate. But I understand Chrétien is bringing out all the federal Liberals from the province of Ontario to try and prop up Dalton. That's great for us, because if we can keep Dalton there for another four years—unfortunately, that means Chrétien will be there for another four years. Dalton's helpful to us; Chrétien certainly isn't. That's rather unfortunate.

A wise man once said that of all the tasks of government, the most basic is to protect the citizens against violence. Violence can take many forms. In this day and age, things like AIDS and hepatitis B and getting that from hypodermic syringes is not the kind of thing that should happen. With the Safe Streets Act there's a lot of concern that we're going to try and get some of these syringes, needles, off the street—broken glass, used condoms, that kind of thing.

Maybe I could just relate a small story to you, Mr Speaker. One of my staff members who used to live here in Toronto—as a matter of fact in the Scarborough Bluffs area—back in 1993 went one day to pick up his three-year-old daughter at daycare. This daycare was on the corner lot of Warden just south of Kingston Road. As a matter of fact, it was right in Dan Newman's riding. He's a great member in this House who looks after his constituents extremely well. Right at the foot of Warden Street is a nude beach area. Anyway, when he went to pick up his three-year-old, the owner of the daycare mentioned that they'd found three hypodermic syringes lying in the bushes in the front yard. Now, they could have just as easily been in the backyard where the kids might have picked them up and ended up getting AIDS or something like that from them. This is a form of violence in a quiet sort of way. It's unfortunate that people would be so inconsiderate as to risk young children. Really, that ended up as the catalyst of why this individual moved out of Toronto to Northumberland. I can understand why he would have moved to Northumberland anyway. With the beautiful rolling hills, it has to be one of the most beautiful counties in the province of Ontario. But that's beside the point and a whole other story.

The provisions of the Safe Streets Act would make it an offence to dispose of any dangerous materials like a hypodermic needle or condom or broken glass. It would make it an offence for people that are threatening and being solicited for handouts. It would make it an offence to solicit other persons while they're intoxicated—that makes an awful lot of sense—and certainly with a captive audience. It's unfair when people are at an automatic teller machine to have somebody come up trying to solicit from you, extremely uncomfortable, even though some of these members in opposition say, "That's just a great place to be, with bright lights along with the vide camera." I really have to disagree.

Also, finally, it would be an offence to disrupt traffic. We have enough trouble getting the traffic moving right now, because with this government we've created 610,000 net new jobs. Those people are all driving to and from work, they're producing goods that are being transported on the roads, we are ending up with a lot more vehicles on the road and we don't need to have them being held up. It's a nuisance to law-abiding citizens when squeegee kids and other aggressive panhandlers are out there.

As a matter of fact, it really creates a lot of road rage and there's a lot of concern right now about the amount of road rage it's created. Road rage can easily evolve from this kind of thing. As a matter of fact, just a quote from the CAA, a very reputable organization; this comes from David Leonhardt. "Increased congestion in Ontario's large cities has made drivers more impatient and road conditions more dangerous, Leonhardt says. 'The middle of a public roadway is no place to be conducting business of any kind. Pedestrians should stay safely on the sidewalks, except to cross the street.'"

I'm genuinely concerned for the squeegee kids and others who would be out on the road panhandling; it's really a very dangerous situation for them. I've heard of them rolling under transports to get away. They're facing, at minimum, two-tonne cars and half-ton trucks coming at them, not to mention the large transports. So I think it's very important just to get them off the street for their own safety.

When this issue came up I was quite concerned for volunteer fire departments, for some of the service clubs and whether they would still have the right to operate some of the voluntary toll roads. In discussions with the Attorney General and reading the bill, there's no question in my mind that they'll still have this opportunity. As a matter of fact, going up to where my cottage is, I often go through Northbrook. There is a Lions Club there, a great Lions Club, and they often have a toll road set up. It's voluntary. They don't stop the traffic. They have a nice sign. As you come into Northbrook it says: "Voluntary toll road ahead. Pull to the right." They do not interfere with the traffic. This is going to be very acceptable because it's non aggressive and it is not a captive audience. Service clubs do not have any real concern about this unless they're going to impede traffic, and we don't want service clubs doing that. I don't think service clubs want

to impede traffic anyway. Most of them are very very respectable people and I don't think you're going to find them all that aggressive.

It's time that we took the handcuffs off our police and gave them an opportunity to do something when they see these kinds of offences occurring. They would have the opportunity to arrest an offender (1) if he or she believes that an offence has been committed, (2) to establish the identity of the person, (3) to prevent continuation of that activity, and (4) when the offender ignores a warning not to repeat the offence.

1740

Tuesday of this week, many of us had members of the police force from our local community come and visit us here at Queen's Park. They also had a reception Tuesday evening down in the dining room. I heard repetitively from the police that they feel rather ineffective with some of the laws and that some of these laws should be changed, such as this one and others that have been discussed here this evening. That's what we're doing with this legislation.

This will also give the police some flexibility, and I feel that's quite important. The police would have options to deal with the problem by, first, essentially issuing a warning; secondly, they could issue a ticket; third, they could issue a summons; and fourth, they could contact the appropriate social service or psychiatric treatment agency.

If we are to tolerate this kind of behaviour, I'm afraid it's going to go down a very slippery slope indeed. By passing this bill, it's a preventative step from sliding down that slippery slope. I lived for a year on the island of Java in Indonesia, I've travelled in Bangladesh and in Thailand, and I can tell you that the kind of panhandling that goes on in the streets in those countries is not acceptable by anybody's measures or means. It's extremely aggressive as you pull up to a stoplight, and we just don't want that kind of thing here. It drives tourists away, it drives people out of our communities, and that's not what we want for any of our large cities, especially Toronto and Ottawa, where the squeegeeing already really is established. I think in countries like the Philippines—a country I haven't toured in, but I understand this from some of our Philippine immigrants—they refuse to go back to their homeland because of the aggressive panhandling that goes on at airports and on the roads in the Philippines. It would be most unfortunate if Canadians felt they didn't want to come back to Canada because of aggressive panhandling, but that's the situation that can evolve if you tolerate it.

In conclusion, in windup so that some other members of our party have a few minutes to make a few comments, the opposition may think this is not all that important a concern, but to some people who are out on the streets with their cars, there's no question that it is a significant concern to them. It's really at the very root of citizens having the right to go about their business undisturbed.

For this reason, I certainly can support the time allocation motion as well as being able to support Bill 8 very enthusiastically.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I'm pleased to rise tonight to speak on this bill. Community safety is a very important issue with us, and I'm disappointed again that we are bringing measures to protect Ontarians, and the Liberal opposition and the other opposition are voting against it without taking into account that these measures are important to Ontarians. Each time we have brought measures to protect Ontarians, the opposition has voted against it. Each time we have brought measures to cut taxes for Ontarians, the opposition has voted against it. Each time we have brought measures to cut fraud in Ontario, the opposition has voted against it.

I was just yesterday in my riding of Mississauga East opening a community police station. Some 20 years ago as a lawyer training at Parkdale Community Legal Services, we were talking about community police offices and people thought it was an idea that would not be acceptable in Ontario because there was no need for it. Well, I would like to inform you that today it's very needed in Ontario. We all know of the recent shocking events of violation of law, of people who have been beaten and people who have been killed right here in the Toronto region, in Mississauga and in other regions of Ontario. It's high time for us to bring measures to curtail crime.

I can understand if the opposition has some suggestions, but they talk about squeegee kids. The first time I recall hearing about squeegee kids, it was raised by a member of the Liberal Party who had his windshield wiper broken by a squeegee kid. Last Tuesday evening, we had a member from the Liberal Party speaking on this bill, indicating that he often felt afraid in his car when he was approached by a squeegee kid, but he felt there was no need to bring in a law.

Interjection.

Mr DeFaria: It was a member of the Liberal Party who indicated that when he was approached by a squeegee kid, he felt afraid in his car, but all he did was lock the door and raise the window of his vehicle and he felt that that was enough, that Ontarians could do that and not have a law there to protect them.

We feel differently. We feel that there is a need to protect Ontarians so people in this city, people in this province, can feel that they can drive around the streets of big cities without fearing for their lives, that they can go out in the streets without being approached and threatened by people. This policy is well known. It is the broken-window approach to law that you have to curtail crime, even if it's crime that is considered minor, because if you don't curtail it at the beginning, it may escalate.

I know the problem that Ontarians have. I drive through Toronto, I walk in downtown streets, I take the TTC in Toronto, and I can tell you, I don't like people approaching me in a violent manner or in an aggressive manner when I am using my rights as a citizen to walk in the streets of this province, and I think Ontarians feel the same way.

When I look at the bill, I don't see what the opposition Liberals and the NDP disagree with. I am sure they don't think that people should be solicited in a threatening manner. I'm sure they don't feel that Ontarians should endure abusive language when they are approached by someone in the streets. I'm sure they agree that no one should be allowed to dispose of hypodermic needles or syringes in the grass or in the parks. I know a member indicated that there was nothing wrong with it. What's wrong with throwing a syringe in the park? Something is wrong with it, because a child may pick up that syringe and may be contaminated with a disease. I hope the members will consider this bill and support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved government motion number 8. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Deputy Speaker: I just wanted to give my personal regards to the member for Ottawa West-Nepean. Glad to see your health allows you to be here.

Mr Hudak has moved government notice of motion number 8. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Guzzo, Garry J.	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hardeman, Ernie	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Harris, Michael D.	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Hastings, John	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Hodgson, Chris	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Jackson, Cameron	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Johns, Helen	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Marland, Margaret	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tumbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Mazzilli, Frank	Wetlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Young, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	Marchese, Rosario
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike		

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are 16.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1 o'clock, Monday, November 22.

The House adjourned at 1802.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
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		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, David Young
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 22 November 1999

Lundi 22 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 novembre 1999

The House met at 1333.

Prayers.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I seek unanimous consent to wear the purple ribbon representing the struggle to prevent violence against women, and in recognition of 14 women killed at l'École polytechnique in Montreal 10 years ago, and the 33 women who have been murdered in Ontario by their intimate partners since July 2, 1998, the date of the May-Iles inquest jury recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UKRAINIAN TRAGEDY

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is an honour as a member of provincial Parliament to stand and help this Legislature recognize the famine-genocide that occurred in the Ukraine in 1933, where over seven million Ukrainian men, women and children were starved to death by the then Soviet regime. This week, November 19 to 28, it is very significant that Canadian Ukrainians will commemorate the 66th anniversary of this great, horrific tragedy. To ignore this event would be only to invite its repetition. So great was the impact and disruption of this famine-genocide on Ukraine society that raw statistics to provide the exact number of starved cannot be determined. However, historians have documented victims between seven million and 10 million in number.

The Ukrainian community continues to make positive contributions to our society here in Canada. I appreciate and thank them for their support, and I'm looking forward to working with them on their future endeavours.

Coinciding with the commemoration date proclaimed by the decree of the president of Ukraine and the statement officially presented at the United Nations by Ukraine's ambassador regarding crimes of genocide, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress is to be congratulated for continuing to increase public awareness of the famine-genocide of 1933.

AL POOLMAN

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): It gives me great pride to rise today and recognize a man of great talent from my riding of Peterborough. Now in his 86th year, Mr Al Poolman is a very respected and prolific artist who has masterfully captured the natural beauty of the Kawarthas over a career spanning seven decades.

Mr Poolman's works have told the stories of the First Nations people. These stories have centred around the Curve Lake reserve located in the heart of the Kawarthas on a peninsula between Buckhorn and Chemong lakes. His paintings have illustrated the rugged and natural beauty of the land, as well as the personal histories of its inhabitants. This is why it is important to recognize his contribution. He depicts the life of the people who first settled on the land and, in doing so, gives us a unique glimpse into an important past. His works speak both of a rich heritage and a proud culture, set together on the breathtaking backdrop of this province.

On behalf of the riding of Peterborough, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Al Poolman on his recent art exhibition at the Whetung Ojibwa Crafts Art Gallery and wish him continued success in the future. We also thank him for the unique voice that he has given to watercolours, oils and acrylics.

DISTINGUISHED HAMILTONIANS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to pay honour to a great number of Hamiltonians who have achieved tremendous success in their life.

Let me start, though, by saying that yesterday I had the pleasure of being in Montreal and cheering the Hamilton Tiger Cats on to the Grey Cup, again in Vancouver next week. I'm certain we're going to come home with the cup again for Ontario and for Hamilton, and I certainly look forward to that happening.

Recently, the Sons of Italy honoured Dr Nicholas Mancini as Citizen of the Year for the Hamilton Italian Canadian community. Dr Mancini has had a dental practice on Barton Street for 51 years in the city of Hamilton. Over the years, 30, 40 or 50 years ago, he looked after new immigrants who couldn't afford dental care. Dr Mancini was there for them. He was knighted by Pope Pius XII. He was a former trustee and chair of the Hamilton Catholic School Board and has served on over 17 committees, boards and agencies in his career.

Also recently, Bill Bain was honoured. Bill Bain served for over 30 years with the Hamilton East Kiwanis Club. His community service in every aspect of our community has been outstanding. Mr Bain led that organization through many changes and through many great successes over the past 30 years.

As well, the other night six great Hamiltonians were honoured for their great work and their achievement, and I'm proud to stand here and thank them for their contribution to our great city.

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TORONTO COUNCIL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): Once again, the council for the city of Toronto and Mayor Mel just don't get it. First, Councillor Tom Jakobek and Treasurer Wanda Liczyk warned that the city's debt would double within five and taxpayers could face a double-digit property tax increase. Now Mayor Mel sees the solution to years of city mismanagement as a Toronto separatist movement.

In the past few weeks, we have seen city council spend \$10.5 million on what they call a "modest reworking" of Nathan Phillips Square, councillors privately and openly lobbying for personal salary increases, and overspending by the Toronto zoo, whose answer to sagging attendance is to increase admission fees.

Many councillors and staff continue to bring forward unrealistic Christmas wishes. They're really wishing for a return to the days when governments could tax and spend at their leisure. Significant savings from amalgamation are still being left on the table. So far, there has not been the political will to aggressively go after those savings. Toronto council should work towards encouraging the growth and expansion of business as a means of increasing the tax base, not increasing the tax rate and chasing even more commercial activity away from the city. In short, get into the game and put an end to "Lucien" Lastman's absurd province-of-Toronto gambit. It is nothing more than a means to direct attention away from the real problems and solutions facing the city of Toronto.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): After having cut programs and funding to post-secondary institutions and forcing many students to incur massive debt, Mike Harris is cutting government-funded student loan programs by another \$75 million. So bad are the policies of this government regarding post-secondary funding that our student association at Laurentian University in Sudbury opened its second food bank on Friday so that our brightest and best won't go hungry.

Todd Bosak, from Laurentian, points out that the cuts are even more disastrous for Laurentian because it has one of the highest percentages of students in the province

who need financial assistance. Massive tuition hikes, coupled with diminished access to financial assistance, is evidence that Mike Harris is attempting to create an elite system of post-secondary education.

In response to this continued assault on post-secondary education, student associations at Laurentian, in Ontario and across Canada are organizing Access 2000, a nationwide rally to protest these horrible cuts to colleges and universities.

Mike Harris seems to have the will to invest in his own golf games, travel and expensive lunches, but no interest in investing in the future of our province, which is our students. We can only hope that the united actions of Access 2000 will make Mike Harris finally pay attention to these real problems. The Premier should be ashamed of himself for initiating government policies that force university students to open food banks so that their fellow students won't go hungry.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Today I rise in solemn commemoration of the lives of too many women who have been killed by violence at the hands of men. Before me I have a number of roses. There are 14 red roses, in memory of the lives of the young women who were killed at L'École polytechnique in Montreal 10 years ago. There is one single white rose, in memory of the lives of all women who have died of violence at the hands of men in their lives. Then there are three purple and three white roses together, which together symbolize 33, the 33 women who have died at the hands of their intimate partners since July 1998, when the jury recommendations from the May-Iles inquest were released.

Today OAITH, the shelter representatives, were here speaking loudly and clearly, and I hope the government listened and heard. They pointed out that the jury recommendations were so clear on what needed to be done. Some of the things need to be changed in the justice system, and the government is moving on that front, but equally the jury cried out for changes in support to community-based shelters and second-stage housing. They have a simple request to you: It's \$120,000 per shelter and second-stage housing, to bring the first immediate resources in, and a review of the funding for the long term. It's not a lot. I hope you listened. I hope you heard.

CAIRINE WILSON SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): It's my pleasure today to speak to you about some very special young people who live in my riding of Carleton-Gloucester.

The students at Cairine Wilson Secondary School in Orleans have, over the last few weeks, been filling Christmas shoeboxes with toys, candies and other items for shipment to children in Kosovo, Central and South America, Southeast Asia and West Africa.

This first-time effort, with more than one third of the students at Cairine Wilson school participating, has produced over 230 Christmas boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Students decided whether their gift would be for a boy or girl and the age of the child. They stuffed the boxes with a variety of goodies such as small cars, dolls, school supplies, T-shirts and picture books. This volunteer initiative was launched by the school's Christian Fellowship Club, the staff, administration and students at the school.

Here in Ontario we enjoy a quality of life, community and compassion for one another that is unrivalled anywhere else in the world, and the students who participated in this effort are carrying on this great tradition as well as setting a fine example for all other Ontarians.

Christine Mudryk, who filled two Christmas boxes with some of her favourite toys, said, "We are so blessed here that we take it for granted."

My congratulations go out to the staff and students at Cairine Wilson Secondary School for their outstanding effort for children around the world.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): We heard in the throne speech several references to "real people." This description was an obvious slap in the face to anyone in Ontario who doesn't live up to the government's definition. Should you need a helping hand in Ontario in order to succeed you're not "real."

Judy Visca is a constituent in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. She's a real person. She is in the process of attempting to better her life and the lives of her children by upgrading her education. She was a participant in the Ontario Works program until deciding to improve her employability chances by going back to school to train in hair design. At this point a number of Catch-22s began to apply.

She was accepted into a hair design program and made application to OSAP for financial assistance. She was accepted, making her ineligible for further assistance through Ontario Works—Catch-22 number one.

Her student financial support, because of the nature of her training program, is covered only by the federal portion of the OSAP plan—Catch-22 number two—thus limiting her support to \$6,980 for a 42-week program. Deduct from this \$5,300 for tuition and another \$500 for course materials and she's left with \$1,180 to live on for a 10-month period.

Ms Visca has joint custody of her children—Catch-22 number three. They stay with her 12 to 15 days a month. She has to feed them. These are her choices: Give up her plans to go back to school, or sink into debt to provide food and shelter while going to school, or cut her costs by giving up those 12 to 15 days a month with her children.

I ask this government to give consideration to this situation.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I rise today to comment on a component of the auditor's report, in particular as it relates to cancer patient waiting periods in my riding. This problem is not a new problem but is the result of too many years in which the health care system was allowed to decline during the NDP and Liberal governments of 1985 to 1995. Those two governments completely ignored the cancer treatment and other health care needs of my riding, Kitchener Centre. During their tenure the health care facilities declined to the point where one prominent doctor stated that the emergency ward in one of our hospitals had reached Third World standards.

That situation was intolerable, particularly in a region such as Waterloo, the GDP of which matches that of the province of New Brunswick at \$14 billion and is one of Canada's most important economic regions.

To prove its commitment to addressing this problem, this government has committed to opening a new cancer treatment centre in Kitchener in the immediate future. I look forward to the day I will be taking part in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new cancer treatment centre at the Grand River Hospital.

The health care professionals in my riding are excited about the improvements to the facilities and services which are taking place as a result of this government's determination to ensure that Ontario's health care system is among the best in the world.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAXPAYER PROTECTION ACT (GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING STANDARDS), 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES (NORMES CONCERNANT LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE)

Mr McGuinty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to end partisan government advertising / Projet de loi 17, Loi mettant fin à la publicité gouvernementale à caractère politique.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Short comment?

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My bill establishes for the first time in Ontario legal standards for government advertising, including that it be in the public interest and that it be non-partisan. My bill will, in keeping with the Provincial Auditor's recommendation, prohibit this government from using hard-earned taxpayer dollars to fund partisan political advertising.

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MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on November 22, 23 and 24, 1999, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

APPOINTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to have a motion without notice regarding an interim appointment of the Environmental Commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Do we have unanimous agreement? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"To the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Ivy Wile as the Environmental Commissioner for a term of two months, commencing December 1, 1999, as provided in section 53 of the Environmental Bill of Rights Act."

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Pending the arrival of the Deputy Premier, who I understood was going to be here today, I will direct my first question to the Minister of the Environment.

When you wrote your now infamous letter, you made it perfectly clear that when it comes to the Oak Ridges moraine, you are firmly planted in the corner of Ontario developers. This weekend, when 200 delegates attending a conference on our water supply came together and called on you to place a temporary freeze on development, increase legislation to protect the moraine, you were offered a shining opportunity to redeem yourself. But what did you do? You said no. You said you were completely satisfied with the voluntary guidelines that had been in place in this province since 1991.

Minister, developers couldn't have said it any better themselves. I'm asking you now: When are you going to start acting on behalf of the environment in our province and table legislation that's going to protect the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The characterization of the honourable member is completely wrong. I was at that meeting. He wasn't, so I wonder where he gets his reports from. Maybe from a certain publication that is very supportive of him but does not represent the views of the people of Ontario. If he wants to know what I said rather than what he reads in the papers, because he wasn't there, I'd be happy to share that with the honourable member at any time.

Mr McGuinty: Those voluntary guidelines which you continue to insist are adequate have been assessed by every expert in the province as being completely inadequate when it comes to protecting the Oak Ridges moraine, not only for this generation but for generations yet to come.

With respect to farming, in the GTA now we are losing 7,500 acres of farmland each and every year. Over the course of the next 20 years, we're going to lose 150,000 acres of valuable farmland that happens to be the most productive farmland in the province. Over the next 20 years, if you continue to sit on your hands, we're going to lose one quarter of the farmland that is available in the GTA.

Minister, again, when are you going to start standing up for the environment, start standing up to developers and table a bill? If you can't do that, then why don't you adopt the legislation that has been put forward by Mike Colle, who has done more than you have since you've had the job?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member didn't care enough about the moraine to be there. I was there, and I gave an opening address, which I think was received very warmly by the delegates. I will share this with the Legislature, because this is important public policy. I said that we wanted the input of the stakeholders. There were a lot of good ideas that I and the honourable member representing Oak Ridges heard at the meeting, and we are quite willing to assess the ideas of the waterfront regeneration trust. I also said that we are at the OMB, representing the provincial interest, which is our responsibility as a government, on the environmental issues he purports to care so strongly about.

I also said that we have a very strict—in fact stricter than when he was in power—water-taking permit system in this province, which is designated for the long-term interest of the province, and is there to ensure that water taken from the moraine or any other area in Ontario is replenishable. That's how we're acting, not engaging in cheap rhetoric.

Mr McGuinty: You're not acting, Minister. Give us a break. All you're doing is fiddling while we sell off the Oak Ridges moraine to developers. You are doing nothing. If you want to look decisive on this issue, stand

up now and declare an immediate freeze—it'll take effect immediately, it'll start today and it will ensure that we take the time and the care to put in place legislation that will protect the interests not only of this generation but of generations yet to come.

Your problem is that you are spending so much time shilling for developers that you should be registered as a lobbyist acting on their behalf.

Minister, one more time, will you stand up in this Legislature, tell us that you are going to freeze development effective immediately and that you are going to pass Mike Colle's bill that will protect this property for generations yet to come?

Hon Mr Clement: All I can tell you is that I was at the meeting. I wanted to take part in the meeting.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Minister of the Environment was there, and the Liberal Party's environment critic was at that meeting as well. For him to suggest—

The Speaker: Order. It's not a point of order.

Hon Mr Clement: The member who asked the question is busy finding every last McGuinty to stack into every last delegate position to his convention.

The fact is that we are protecting the long-term interests of the province of Ontario. We have a strict water-taking permit system, which is better than any freeze that says, before you take a single drop of water out of the moraine, you have to prove to me, to my ministry and to everyone that it is scientifically replenishable. That is better than any Liberal quick fix, because it protects the long-term interests of the moraine. It is better than some bill that is presented by his party that says that whenever you want to build a new tool shed in your backyard, you have to get the approval of a bureaucrat.

We have the long-term interests of the province in mind. It is better than anything they are presenting to the people of Ontario, and we're proud of it.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): A question for the Deputy Premier. But in passing, we now understand and see the true colours of this Minister of the Environment, and I can tell you they're not green.

Deputy Premier, last week the Provincial Auditor was very critical of your government for having used hard-earned taxpayer dollars for partisan political advertising. One of the things he did was quote with approval a guideline that's in place in another jurisdiction, which says, "A government should not ... disseminate material that ... is designed to secure or has the effect of attempting to secure, popular support for party-political persuasion of the members of the government."

Mr Deputy Premier, a few moments ago I introduced a private member's bill that would have the exact intended effect of the guideline quoted with approval by the Provincial Auditor. Will you support my private member's bill and protect the interests of the taxpayers in Ontario?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I don't know, because I haven't seen the member's private member's bill. I'd have to look at it. But I will say that just because you are proposing a piece of legislation—I can recall a government you were a part of, the David Peterson government, that made a great fool of itself about introducing conflict-of-interest legislation. In fact, they took the standards that the Davis government had, watered them down so they could have conflict, and then professed to the world that they had done a great job.

1400

We are taking this quite seriously, as we do every comment that the Provincial Auditor makes. We are currently reviewing his directives, we're looking at his report, and we will come forward with what the government will do with respect to guidelines.

But just because you've introduced a piece of legislation, I sure as heck hope it's better than David Peterson's conflict-of-interest legislation, which allowed his cabinet ministers to have conflicts and still serve in the government of Ontario.

Mr McGuinty: The Deputy Premier is great at taking shots at past and ancient governments. I wonder if he might take a shot at answering this question. Deputy Premier, you were provided with notice to this effect on December 16, 1998, by the Provincial Auditor, who registered his concerns with the secretary of cabinet back then. Notwithstanding that notice, notwithstanding the expression of his very grave concern about your use of taxpayer dollars, you continued with an orgy of expenditures on partisan political advertising that had nothing to do with defending the interests of taxpayers and everything to do with defending your interests and the Mike Harris re-election campaign. I put a solid proposal on the table today, Deputy Premier. Will you act now, in keeping with the request of the Provincial Auditor, and support that bill and the interests of Ontario taxpayers?

Hon Mr Eves: The current directive that the government is using was put in place in 1985 by the then Liberal government. If you're now saying that directive is not good enough and those policies aren't good enough—and the Provincial Auditor has indicated, with all due respect—we'll be reviewing the directive. I indicated to you that the government will be reviewing the directive and taking the Provincial Auditor's opinion into account. But just because you've introduced a piece of legislation, don't sit there and be smug. Why didn't the government of the day, in 1988 when the Provincial Auditor's report was filed, do something about the directive if they thought it was that important?

Mr McGuinty: Last week a cabinet document floated to the surface and we discovered that this government has intentions to cut programs to children who are blind, children who are deaf and children who are suffering from severe learning disabilities. This government later made an announcement of \$300 million in cuts and told us that there are \$600 million more in cuts to come. But at the same time, this government proceeded with \$100

million in expenditures for partisan political advertising that has nothing to do with the interests of Ontario taxpayers and everything to do with the interests of this government.

Tell me, Deputy Premier, how can you justify making cuts to programs that serve the needs of our most vulnerable while at the same time you refuse to adopt a proposal that will cut back on partisan political advertising?

Hon Mr Eves: I've said no such thing. I said we'd be happy to take a look at the leader of the official opposition's proposed piece of legislation. We're looking at the Provincial Auditor's opinion. We are looking at the directives that have been in place since 1985.

Mr McGuinty: I gave it to you two years ago.

Hon Mr Eves: Excuse me. The David Peterson government was put on notice by the then Provincial Auditor in 1988. Obviously the government of the day looked at it and didn't think there was any need. The Provincial Auditor—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order.

Was the Deputy Premier finished?

Hon Mr Eves: The Provincial Auditor did go on in his report to note that these recommendations are new, that no other government in Canada, including the federal government, has them in place.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Eves: I would say with all due respect to the member for Windsor West, she might want to look at the Liberal government's record in terms of expenditure.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): This is the worst in the history of the province.

Hon Mr Eves: It is not. We have spent—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Windsor West, order.

Is the Deputy Premier finished?

Hon Mr Eves: To sum up: The expenditures in advertising of this government between 1995-96 and 1998-99: \$163 million; the NDP government between 1990-91 and 1994-95, \$238 million; and the Liberal government between 1985-86 and 1988-89, \$277 million.

CHILD CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the minister responsible for children and it is about your child care cuts of last week, which I believe is just another example of the growing gap in Ontario. One week you announce tax cuts for the well off, and the next week more than 3,000 children across Ontario lose their child care subsidy. How do you defend cutting \$25 million from an essential service for children and working families in Ontario?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): Mr Speaker, I'm referring this to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We recognize and support parents in providing

child care for their children. We understand and appreciate the importance of it to them: to allow them to work, and to allow them to search for work, for those on social assistance. Our commitment to child care is matched not just by words but by actions. Since we were elected the child care budget and the budget for parents to support child care has increased substantively. I think that demonstrates our clear commitment to child care.

We support child care in a whole host of ways. We support child care through fee subsidies, through wage subsidies, through resource centres, through special needs resources, through Ontario Works child care, through LEAP, to name just a few.

Mr Hampton: The minister is right about one thing: This is a government that has made several child care announcements, and then all of what was announced failed to happen. I actually think the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care has it right. They put it very bluntly: This Premier's only purpose is to cut taxes on the backs of the poor and our children.

I'll put the question to you another way, Minister. How is it that one week you can stand in this Legislature and justify tax cut subsidies for NHL hockey players of \$16 million, but the next week you announce child care cuts of over \$25 million? How can you afford the money for NHL hockey millionaires, but kids are told there's no money?

Hon Mr Baird: I think it won't come as any surprise to the leader of the third party that I don't share his view with respect to the NHL. I don't support, nor does this government support, any subsidies to professional sports. What we do support is substantial supports to child care.

I read off a number of things this government has done to increase spending on child care. We also have introduced a \$200-million Ontario child care supplement for working families. We have a 30% workplace tax incentive to encourage workplaces to construct child care spaces, a whole host of initiatives designed to increase child care spaces in Ontario.

What we've seen since this government was elected is that we have more child care spaces in the province, we have more child care centres, and this government is now spending more on child care than any government in Ontario's history.

Mr Hampton: The sum total of what the minister has said is this: If the parents can afford it, they can get child care. That's your government's definition of child care in Ontario, just like your definition of health care and more and more your definition of education. If parents have the money, they can get child care, but if parents are hard-pressed, you have no answer. In fact all you're doing for parents who are hard-pressed is doing away with the child care subsidy spaces. There's now a waiting list of 15,000 children for subsidized spaces and you are making the situation worse.

Minister, everything you announced last week hits at children. You're not doing something that's going to assist municipalities or give benefits to municipalities, you're taking child care spaces away from children. How

can you justify tax cuts for the well off and taking more child care spaces away from children?

Hon Mr Baird: The members of the New Democratic Party like to measure one's commitment and the priority one accords to a particular issue purely in money. By their own measure, this government is spending more supporting parents and providing child care to their children; this government is spending substantially more money than they spent. They must be embarrassed that Mike Harris's government, this Conservative government, is showing more support to child care, more support to children's aid societies, more support to children with autism, more support for a variety of children's programs than their government provided.

1410

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services, and I would like a page to come.

During my member's statement, I spoke about the significance of these roses, symbolic, beautiful, poignant reminders of the lives and the deaths of too many women in this province. There's a group of them, and I am going to send these over to you, that represents the 33 women who have lost their lives at the hands of intimate partners since the recommendations from the May-Iles inquest jury.

They asked you to do a number of things, some things on the justice system side, but many things on the community side. You have moved forward with respect to changes in the justice system, but increasing the independent, community-based supports that abused women rely on, shelters, second-stage housing programs, you've failed miserably on that front. The jury was very clear on that point, but we've yet to see any action.

Today, the shelters are here to ask you to do two specific things: They're asking for \$120,000 for each shelter and second-stage housing project—that will hire just two more counsellors for every site—and they're asking you to initiate the funding review for shelters and for second-stage housing community supports. Will you do those two things, Minister?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to say at the outset that this government recognizes the importance of this issue and the very serious consequences of domestic violence. Through the government's Agenda for Action strategy, we're providing an additional \$27 million between 1997 and 2000-01 to support women and their families in breaking the cycle of violence.

The member opposite raises the request of a group that came forward this morning with a report. I haven't had occasion yet to receive their report, but I want to say very earnestly to her that I'm certainly committed to reviewing the report and giving every consideration to the request.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Minister, once again we've got the clear presence and the clear direction of your government. These women have been knocking on your door for over four years asking you to address these problems. The reason they put forward this very specific solution is because you've ignored every other plea they've made. It's not lost on them that your government can stand here one week and can say to the whole world that your government has found room to give NHL hockey franchises in Ontario \$16 million in tax breaks. Their total proposal, if you add it up, for all of the women's centres across this province would amount to less than \$15 million.

I ask you again, how is it that your government can find, without any problem whatsoever, \$16 million to finance the fat salaries of NHL hockey millionaires, but 33 women have been killed since the May-Iles report, and you say, "I'll study the situation"? How do you justify that?

Hon Mr Baird: This member and this government certainly don't support subsidies to millionaire hockey players, and, as I said earlier, I'll repeat that to let that not go on the record.

This year we'll spend more than \$73 million on over 98 shelters and over 100 counselling agencies for abused women and their children across the province.

The government has recently received a report from the Joint Committee on Domestic Violence, and we're presently awaiting the report from the Office for Victims of Crime, which is to advise us on how we can improve services for victims. Once I receive this report and the report that was released today, I can certainly commit to the members opposite and to all colleagues in this House that we will review the recommendations together and determine the best course of action.

The Speaker: I know it's a sensitive issue, but the members also know that the use of props is not a part of the standing order, and I would appreciate the members' co-operation.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. It is now becoming apparent that Ontario Power Generation, previously known as Ontario Hydro, has no intention of living up to its commitment made in 1991 to cap its nitrogen oxide emissions next year at 38 kilotonnes. We've had press conferences by the Ontario College of Family Physicians and the Ontario Clean Air Alliance focusing on this issue.

As a result, its coal-fired generating stations will pour smog, acid-rain-producing gases, toxic air pollutants—including the nerve toxin mercury—and six cancer-causing substances, such as arsenic and lead, into Ontario's air and increase by 42% its emissions of sulphur dioxide.

While you and your government smile and nod at Ontario's largest corporate air polluter, Ontario Power

Generation, and sit on the sidelines, letting Ontario Power Generation call its own shots, people of Ontario suffer. Will you now at long last admit that your voluntary acquiescence approach with polluters is a failure, and will you implement tough new, unequivocal regulations and legislation to compel OPG to meet its so-called voluntary commitment?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question. Indeed, we have in place and we are seeking to continue to augment our regulations in this area, but also working with various industries, because they're the ones that have to implement what is in the best interests of Ontario, which is cleaner air and lower emissions.

As the honourable member, being a member of this House, well knows, we have had a particular challenge for Ontario Power Generation because of the nuclear facilities being off-line. We are anxiously awaiting the approval of the federal government to ensure that those facilities can go on-line in a safe manner. That in itself will reduce the emissions which he is concerned about and which I am concerned about.

This is a problem that we have in place right now that does have a solution. Part of it is a better mix of power generation, which Ontario Hydro or Ontario Power Generation is seeking in and of itself to get to, and part of it is a constant review of our air quality standards, many of which are 20 years old now. Our government has committed to reviewing those over the next weeks and months.

Mr Bradley: Minister, you and the Harris government have played footsie with polluters now since you came to power. The one promise you have kept—I'll give you credit for this—is to get the Ministry of the Environment out of the faces of polluters in this province.

Your friends in Ontario Power Generation have in fact abandoned their commitment to reduce energy consumption, have abandoned the commitment to buy cleaner electricity in this province. Highly regarded scientist Dr David Suzuki has estimated that pollution from fossil fuels—coal, oil and gas—means premature death for up to 6,000 Ontarians each year and increased hospital admissions for asthma and respiratory illness for children. Family physicians in Ontario will now be making their patients aware of their very serious health problem.

Minister, your government is prepared to play hardball with the weakest people in our society. You and your Premier still kowtow to polluters by allowing voluntary pledges and promises from the province's top polluters. Will you now stop being an apologist for Ontario Power Generation and demand that your big polluting friends cap their nitrogen oxide emissions at 38 kilotonnes, as they promised to do?

Hon Mr Clement: Mr Speaker, you know how I hate to disagree with my honourable colleague, but the fact of the matter is that we have binding commitments from OPG and from other industrial sectors to reduce smog-

causing emissions by 25% over the next five years and by 45% over the next 15 years. This is the government of Ontario policy. This isn't just the policy of the Minister of the Environment; this is government of Ontario policy under our anti-smog action plan. We are committed to this as a government.

The interesting thing is that the people the member rails against are at the table and want to get there too. Is it going to take some creativity? Yes, it will. But it is for our children and our grandchildren that we are doing this. Reducing smog-causing emissions by 45% is a worthwhile goal and it is a goal of the province of Ontario that we will meet. That is our goal.

SPECIALISTS' SERVICES

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I've read with interest reports that certain medical specialists are not able to provide services to their patients and their communities because of a cap on specialist billing under the Ontario health insurance plan. I'd like to know what our government is doing to ensure that people in my riding of London-Fanshawe can obtain specialist care when they need it.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Our government certainly wants to do everything we can to ensure that all Ontarians have access to the quality health care services they require. We have been working hard to encourage more specialists to locate in underserved areas. I'm pleased to note that the number of specialists practising in this province has since 1997 increased by about 238 specialists, and since 1995 we have seen an increase of 450 specialists in Ontario.

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We have a specialist retention initiative in this province. It is a system that was introduced in 1991. It exists to exempt physicians from the impact of thresholds to ensure that patients receive the health care services they need. Each year this is reviewed by the Ontario Medical Association and the Ministry of Health to determine the criteria—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Mazzilli: I'm aware that these initiatives have been effective in certain areas of the province. However, I'd like to know what our government is doing to address the overall issue of access to physician supply and distribution.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Our government has worked extremely hard. This is an issue that has been a priority. In fact, in response to the need to move forward, we have Dr McKendry at the present time conducting a review of the scope and the cause of issues related to physician supply and distribution. He'll soon be bringing his report forward. When he does, we'll set up an expert panel.

We also have indicated that we are developing a system whereby we will reimburse students who are at our medical schools, students entering our medical schools, if they move to an underserved area.

We have also worked with northern communities and northern hospitals to provide incentives for doctors and specialists to locate in those areas and provide the services that are needed, particularly in our emergency rooms.

So we have undertaken many initiatives and we want to ensure that we have the appropriate distribution of physicians throughout the province. The ICES report indicated that the problem in the province is one of distribution as opposed to supply.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance and it has to do with the Provincial Auditor's report. The public will recognize that this is our independent auditor whom we hire—we pay the office about seven and a half million dollars a year—to give us an independent, objective look at the government's spending.

I was interested to see what I can only regard as a scathing report. Here's what the auditor said about your government. He was asked:

"You've seen them now in action for more than four years. From your perspective, do you think that under this government the use of our tax dollars and the services provided by our government are being provided more efficiently and more effectively?"

What was his answer? "Well, as my report points out, the answer is they really aren't. The improvements are not very noticeable at this point. Spending of public funds needs accountability and it's not being done." He says, "There are many examples where clearly the taxpayer is being taken for a ride and things almost die for lack of attention."

The Harris government has now been in office for four and a half years. How can this mess continue to exist?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, we have responded to almost every recommendation the Provincial Auditor has made from year to year. The honourable member is quite correct. The Provincial Auditor is an independent person appointed by the Legislative Assembly to make recommendations to the government of the day. I can tell the honourable member that certainly in my endeavour we will make sure we comply with the Provincial Auditor's suggestions where possible.

Mr Phillips: One of the other concerns the auditor had was that you don't do anything about it. He says, "I raise issues; four years later there's nothing done about it." Specifically in his report he says here, on child care, \$800 million is being spent. He says: "I made these recommendations in 1995. The ministry agreed to take action to implement my recommendations but they did not follow through. Therefore we again make the recommendations." Four years later, you've done nothing. Four years later, \$800 million being spent on child care and the auditor says you haven't acted. He says that he raises issues and continually things don't get done. It's a mess

over there. You are not managing the finances of the province. That's not me. It's the independent Provincial Auditor, who the taxpayers paid \$7.5 million. He has given you an "F." You're failing.

I ask you again: Four and a half years later, you're now in charge, Premier Harris said he was going to improve things. Why are things such a mess under Mike Harris?

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member is quite selective in dealing with specific programs. I acknowledge that there are difficulties with certain programs in government. There are always problems with certain programs in government. The objective on this side of the House is to strive to make them better. I don't see anywhere in here, in the Provincial Auditor's words, that he has given the government an "F," to quote the honourable member. The honourable member is somewhat dramatic. I understand it is his occupation in life to be such during question period. However, I can say to the honourable member that we do take the suggestions and the direction of the Provincial Auditor very seriously. With respect to my own ministry, I can tell the honourable member that every time the Provincial Auditor recommends something, we follow up, and so do my colleagues on this side of the House. I think that record speaks for itself.

ONTARIO STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

In last Friday's newspaper, I was concerned to see reports about student leaders who were condoning fraud in the Ontario student loan program. In particular, it was stated, "I don't blame anybody for fudging the numbers on how much they earn if that's the only way they can get the money to go to school."

Taxpayers demand that governments spend their money prudently. What is your position on OSAP fraud, and can you assure taxpayers in my riding that only deserving students get loans and that the money will be paid back?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank the member for Stoney Creek for his question. Obviously I don't think there's a member of this Legislative Assembly who would tolerate any kind of fraud, including fraud by students. Fraud is not only illegal, but unfair to the hundreds of thousands of students who actually put down the facts on their OSAP application forms. I'd also like to say that these same students tell the truth and play by the rules, and that's what we expect from everyone.

This is unfair to taxpayers because taxpayers pick up the bill, and it's unfair to students because students are there to study, to work hard and to achieve.

The government has announced tighter controls to ensure fairness in the system and to tighten the credit check, which I think is fair to everyone, also fair to that

student who may in fact achieve a loan when they already have private-sector loans. That's not the rules. It doesn't happen in our public institutions at banks and it's not going to happen when taxpayers are footing the bills for loans that cannot be paid.

We're going to continue ways to help our students to eliminate fraud and to—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm sorry. The minister's time has expired.

Supplementary?

Mr Clark: You made it clear that student loan fraud is unacceptable. Parents and high school students in my community would like to know what the government is going to do to help them pay for their education when they leave high school.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Our government is taking several steps to assist our students. I think the most important fact that everyone in this House should know, when you get this question, is that we are spending more than ever on student assistance to support our students.

We have increased OSAP spending by 30% since we came to power and this is to twice as many students. In fact, for those of you who are interested, under the Liberals about 100,000 students were assisted, and currently over 200,000 students are being assisted.

We have asked the colleges and universities to set aside 30% of the increase in tuition to help students in need.

I think I'll just finish on this point: We have created the Ontario student opportunity grant program to provide debt relief for students who borrow more than \$7,000. I'm not sure the members of this Legislative Assembly—

The Speaker: The minister's time is—order. Minister, take your seat, please.

On a point of order, the member for St. Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I would like to request unanimous consent to allow the member another supplementary to ask about the income tax fraud.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? I heard some noes. New question.

1430

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. As you have made abundantly clear, you already know that Ontario Power Generation's five coal-fired plants will exceed the voluntary cap on greenhouse gas emissions by 42% next year. That's equivalent to putting 1.6 million more cars on the road.

Your government promised that Hydro would reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000, yet today we learn they plan to increase these harmful emissions next year to 37 million tonnes. That's 11 million more tonnes than the 1990 level.

Minister, will you stop OPG from putting more greenhouse gases into the air; admit, once and for all, that voluntary compliance hasn't worked; and bring in a

legally enforceable regulated cap on greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for her suggestion. I want to assure her and this House once more that we are concerned about air quality in Ontario and the emission of greenhouse gases. This is a problem that we're grappling with.

As the honourable member knows, the OPG is going through a nuclear recovery program right now, which is on a temporary basis because those uses were made off-line as a result of some safety concerns. We all want to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions but to do so in a safe manner, which is the paramount interest for the people of Ontario.

I would say to the honourable member as well that the issue of greenhouse gas trading—and some of the criticism has been on the trading system for greenhouse gas emissions—is something that actually the federal government has been pursuing, so perhaps she and I can also make that inquiry as to why the federal Liberals are allowing this sort of situation to develop, if it is something that she feels strongly about. But I want her to know that air quality is our number one concern and there are going to be some changes in this area over the next few weeks and months as well.

Ms Churley: Hydro promised in 1995 not to use emission trading to meet emissions caps before such international emission-trading rules were federally approved. I don't want to hear empty promises from you today about down the road and later. People who have children sick with asthma and elderly people don't want to hear you give lame excuses today as to why you're not moving on this.

We want a commitment today. A promise was made and a promise was not kept. It's that simple. We know that in 1997 the all-party select committee on Hydro said in its report that Hydro must comply with voluntary targets and should actually seek to improve emission levels.

Minister, let me ask you again: What will you do to make OPG live up to its promise—forget the shell game that you're playing today—and actually reduce the amount of dangerous greenhouse gas emissions instead of increasing them by 11 million tonnes? That's unacceptable.

Hon Mr Clement: I find myself in partial agreement with the honourable member. This is not a situation that any of us would like to see, and that includes OPG but it also includes the people of Ontario and the government of Ontario.

We're left with a situation where the nuclear units are off-line. That was not a situation that was predictable when these limits were first discussed. We've got a particular issue that has to be dealt with in the near term. We think it can be dealt with in the near term, but it has to be dealt with safely. In the meantime, the Kyoto accord and other international accords recognize the right

of emissions trading. This is something the federal government has been promoting as well, so OPG is operating within those parameters.

In the meantime, we are accepting submissions, which is an ongoing process, as we discuss with our stakeholders ways to get at these problems, just as we've gone through it with Drive Clean to reduce vehicle emissions. This is an area where we will see more announcements in the future, I'm sure.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last Thursday at 6:30 am a fatal accident happened on Highway 417. A pregnant mother of a two-year-old daughter, Deborah Rainey from Hawkesbury, was driving to work and rolled over on an icy bridge near Casselman. A 26-year-old father of two young daughters from St-Isidore, Luc Vigneux, whose funeral is taking place today, had stopped as a good citizen to help Deborah out of the car. Unfortunately, because of the icy road conditions, both of them were killed instantly when a coming truck slid and ran over them.

Minister, this fatal accident is directly related to your ministry's cuts. You have privatized the maintenance of this highway. In the past, as of November 1 of every year, MTO maintenance crews were on duty 24 hours a day. According to a confirmed report, the maintenance crew was out on the road 35 minutes after receiving the call from the MTO patrol and arrived on the scene five minutes after the fatal accident.

Minister, as this relates directly to your cuts, will you accept full responsibility for this fatal accident?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): This is a tragic event, that somebody dies. The circumstances were that a bridge iced; it had black ice. I've spoken to the OPP about when black ice occurs, and there's very little anybody can do to anticipate it. The ministry was monitoring it, and at the time that they believed iced conditions would occur, a very experienced member of the Ministry of Transportation, which still manages this area, called out the salting trucks. The salting trucks were out within 35 minutes, which is a very quick turnaround. It's early in the year to experience ice and it's probable that the victims passed the salt truck on their way.

I will wait until the supplementary, but it is a tragic event.

Mr Lalonde: The ambulance operator told me that the whole of Highway 417 was icy all the way through. At 4:50 in the morning the patrol people had called this contractor to get his crew out. No one was at the site to come out on the highway.

As noted in last week's auditor's report, the auditor wasn't too happy at what he saw. Your ministry is in the process of contracting out all highway maintenance without making sure that security and services are maintained adequately. The contractor involved in last week's

fatal accident had followed your guidelines, which, if I may say so, are putting our people's lives in danger just to save a few bucks.

Minister, my question is, will you restore the 24-hour maintenance service and rehire the former MTO employees you have let go, in order to save the loss of other lives?

Hon Mr Turnbull: First of all, I will recall a personal experience I had some years ago on my way back from the cottage. I experienced a car off the road and I tried to stop to help the automobile and I hit black ice. By the time the OPP arrived, yet another car had hit black ice, and there were three cars off the road, all having hit the same piece of black ice. The comments of the OPP officers were that when you hit black ice, there's nothing you can do. The fact is that this area of contract was being managed by the Ministry of Transportation, so in that respect there was no change.

To the best of my knowledge, and I will double-check this, there have never been 24-hour trucks standing by at this time of the year. There was, however, ministry staff out prior to this and they called out the people when they felt it was needed to have salt trucks out.

I realize that it may be easy for you to make—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time has expired.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to table a document that we believe is extremely important to this House's deliberations today. Earlier, my leader introduced a bill, and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has now called on all of us to support it. So I would seek unanimous consent to table this.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

REPORT CARDS

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question is to the Minister of Education. I was interested to read news reports over the last several weeks that indicate some school boards are having difficulty with the new standardized report card for grade 9. I also see that the OSSTF issued a news release on Remembrance Day in which they say, "Parents should not expect miracles with the new standardized report card."

I have received numerous phone calls from my constituents in Scarborough Southwest from parents who are concerned with this information from the OSSTF. This government is clearly committed to clearer standards and greater accountability, which is why I understand we implemented that standard report card in the first place. This way any parents, whether they live in my constituency of Scarborough Southwest or even Ottawa South or Kenora-Rainy River, will know exactly how their child is doing.

I would like to ask, Minister, if boards across the province are in fact having problems putting these new

report cards into use and, if they are, what is the government doing to fix the problem?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I thank the member for Scarborough Southwest for a very important question. He has spoken out very often in support of reforms to have better-quality education in this province.

A standardized plain-language report card that students and parents can understand is something we are delivering on in grade 9 in this province. I was quite disappointed that despite the fact that OSSTF had an opportunity to raise this with me directly two days before, they chose to put out a press release and go for a headline rather than trying to actually find out if there was a problem.

We called all the boards that were mentioned in this news release—we called all the boards, actually—and they all assured us that things are proceeding as they should be and that there is no difficulty with implementing this in the time lines we have committed to.

Mr Newman: I want to thank the minister for her response, and I'm glad to know the boards across the province are moving forward with the implementation of the new grade 9 report card this year. I know as well as anyone that implementing new technology solutions can be a difficult process. Anyone who has used new software can relate to this.

I'd like to ask the minister how this government is going to support school boards as they implement these new report cards.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member is quite correct that implementing any kind of new information technology is a challenge. That's one of the reasons why we gave the boards additional resources to help them do that. There was \$2 million that was given to them for training and supports to implement this particular step on our improvements in education. We also gave them a great deal of flexibility in terms of how they would do it, the software they would purchase, the providers they would select, because using electronic report cards for many boards is nothing new; they have great experience in doing it.

The new standardized report card, a card that parents and students can understand, was something that parents asked us for, it's something we are putting into place and, because of the co-operation between the boards, the ministry and the teachers, we know we are going to deliver this as the parents expect and want.

SPECIALISTS' SERVICES

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Health. On Monday, November 13, I handed in a petition signed by over 2,500 of my constituents asking your ministry to respond to a crisis in Sarnia-Lambton.

Lambton county has 120,000 people and only two ophthalmologists. One ophthalmologist has closed his doors because your ministry has once again changed the

rules. This change has also affected people in St Catharines. Previously, this ophthalmologist was able to obtain a billing cap exemption because Sarnia-Lambton had been designated as an underserved area. Lambton county went from the "underserved" designation to "not underserved," not because we have more eye doctors coming into the area and not because we have fewer people who need eye doctors. What you did was change the geographic catchment area.

Your ministry's rule change has affected thousands of patients and their families, and I would like to read to you a letter from one of my constituents who outlined a real problem they're facing because of this rule change. It states: "My wife and I have been patients of Dr Murari Patodia since he opened his practice in Sarnia four years ago. Recently I was referred to him by an optometrist, with a problem." He goes on to say, "I can see possibly that we will lose the services of this excellent ophthalmologist who is badly needed in this area."

Minister, will you be responsive to this situation by reinstating the underserved designation and thus returning the billing cap exemption to this ophthalmologist before this person loses his sight because of your rule change?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As I indicated earlier this afternoon, the specialist retention initiative was introduced in 1991 along with the system of threshold reductions, and each year the criteria for the initiative are reviewed by the Physician Services Committee. That is a committee composed of physicians and staff from the Ministry of Health. They make the determination as to what criteria will be used. When there is a situation and physicians feel the need to apply for the SRI status, it is very carefully reviewed by the ministry and the reasons are given for the support or the denial of that application.

Ms Di Cocco: Last year his cap was exempt because your rules were different. You changed the rules this year. You can't blame this on anyone except your ministry. It is your responsibility. There are people who are being affected now and all you have to do is, with a stroke of a pen, address this situation. He has applied again. There is no reason why this cannot be changed to what it was in the past. We still have the same people who need help. We only have two ophthalmologists.

Again, will you step in to rectify this situation? It's a real situation that's affecting thousands of people today. I believe that you've got the opportunity to address this situation now, and it is your responsibility.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I tried to indicate, we try to work very co-operatively with all our health partners. We try to have the benefit of all of their advice and expertise. Each year it is the Physician Services Committee, which is composed of physicians themselves, with the Ministry of Health, that makes decisions around the criteria that will be used. Physicians are exempted from the impact of the threshold if they are in underserved areas or if they are in a unique speciality where there could be a service access problem. We will continue to support the initiative

and we will continue to respond to any physicians who apply for the SRI status.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): My question is for the Solicitor General. Minister, public safety is very important to my constituents as well as the people of Ontario. As you're probably aware, I had about 50 police officers in my office last week. They had a number of concerns but the overriding concern was public safety.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General is responsible for enhancing public safety in Ontario. The public safety division in your ministry is solely dedicated to promoting public safety for the people of Ontario. Minister, so that I can allay the concerns of my constituents, could you please tell the House some of the ways that the public safety division in your ministry contributes to the public safety of Ontario?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I'd like to thank the member for Kitchener Centre for the question. Our public safety branch consists basically of three areas: the forensic centre, the fire marshal's office and Emergency Measures Ontario.

I'd like to focus for a second, if I could, on the Centre of Forensic Sciences. As you know, most noteworthy in the forensics area is the area of DNA testing. You can understand that lately this is an area of expertise we've developed in Ontario that has been of great assistance in current and pressing cases, but also in the solving of cold cases, cases which have remained unsolved for many decades. This is just a small part of the technology and science that's available through the forensics centre. There are many exciting areas; laser technology, for example, that is able to bring out latent prints and detect blood that has been cleaned over.

1450

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Solicitor General's time has run out. Supplementary.

Mr Wettlaufer: On the Centre of Forensic Sciences, you weren't finished giving your information. I'd certainly like to hear more and I know my constituents would like to hear more, so I wonder if you could share that information with us.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: If I could continue speaking about the Centre of Forensic Sciences, science and technology is a very important tool in combating crime in the province. I talked a bit about DNA testing, but I might say that in terms of remaining cutting-edge in DNA testing, we've already committed to and infused double the funding into the size and capacity of DNA labs, and also double the number of employees in the DNA section. So this is quite a commitment we've made.

In addition to that, understand that our province and our chief coroner, Dr Jim Young, have been called upon by other provinces to assist them. Most noteworthy recently, in the case of the Swiss Air tragedy Dr Young was asked to come out and assist in that testing.

I might conclude by saying that our commitment is to science and technology. This is a very important tool to provide to our police in the fight against crime in this province.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. In September you announced, to great fanfare, that you were going to strengthen hazardous waste regulations as part of a six-point action plan. We find that once again in Stoney Creek the ministry has allowed 9,000 tonnes of hazardous waste to be dumped at the Taro landfill site. In fact, in 1998 the ministry initially said that the waste was non-hazardous. Now, one year later, when the ministry eventually got around to testing, we are told that it is hazardous.

My question to you is, what are you going to do about the 9,000 tonnes of hazardous waste at the Taro landfill and when are you going to come through, as you promised, to bring in measures to prevent this from ever happening again in Ontario?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for her question, because it has been of great concern. I can tell the honourable member two things specifically. When the ministry was informed that there was a potential problem, that there was a potential for it to be hazardous—because there was a complex chemical reaction occurring with the subject waste—we immediately required that Philip Services stop receiving that waste at the site. In the second place, once we had completed our tests and found out there was a potential for it to be hazardous, on November 18, last week, we wrote to Philip enterprises requiring that they immediately remove and dispose of the approximately 9,000 tonnes. So we have acted quickly on behalf of the interests of the people of Ontario.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): As members will remember, we had some discussions about petitions. The government House leaders have come together with a procedure which they will be talking about with their caucuses.

Any member wishing to present a petition during routine proceedings will deliver the petition, by noon, to the Clerk's office in room 104 of this building, or room 1521 of the Whitney Block.

If it is delivered by noon to either office, it will be examined by the Clerk and returned in the House in time for the petitions that day. If it is received later than noon hour, every effort will still be made to try to examine the petition and return it for presentation that day. Otherwise it will be returned.

Petitions may also be left at the table when the House is meeting, and should be sent to the table by one of the

pages to avoid crowding. For the simple reason of decorum, I would ask that all members not crowd around the table to deliver or wait for the petitions.

Again, the Clerk will make every effort, as time and circumstances permit, to examine the petition and return it to any member in time for presentation during petitions that day.

If the petition meets the requirements of the standing orders, it will be certified by the Clerk's signature and the petition will then be presented in the House.

If the petition does not meet the requirements of the standing orders, it will be returned with a notation explaining why.

I will be vigilant in enforcing this new practice and will call to order any member attempting to present a petition that does not comply with the standing orders, and that will begin tomorrow.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Do I interpret your remarks about petitions to mean that you're saying that the table officers have to pre-approve petitions before they're read in the House?

The Speaker: Yes. We are saying that they will go to the table, and they will authorize and approve them. What we have said, if you read the statement, is that it will be by noon hour and we will get it on the same day, and we'll try to be flexible. The House leaders have agreed to this procedure, and, as I understand it, they will be dealing with each of the caucuses and outlining the procedures. I did want to, however, announce it here in the House as well.

Mr Ramsay: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Are you saying that if the petition is not in the prescribed format, the table officers will then not allow the member to read that petition in this House?

The Speaker: The standing orders are very clear on this point, for the member. That is why these procedures have been put in place, to meet the standing orders, which we obviously have to do.

Mr Ramsay: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to put on the record that I strongly object to that. I represent a riding that has the second-most under-educated people in Ontario. When they are concerned about an issue, they don't necessarily think of approaching my office to get the standardized format, which I certainly supply them. They usually go off and, in very good conscience, start up a petition. I don't think it's right that the rules of this House would forbid a duly crafted petition, which my constituents put a lot of work into to express their view about issues of the day, from being presented in this House.

The Speaker: The member knows the standing orders have been changed. They are very clear. The standing orders were changed by the members of the House. It isn't a point of order, but I appreciate your registering—

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I don't intend to prolong this debate, and I'm not one who brings a great number of petitions, but I do think the member

from Timiskaming-Cochrane raises a concern that any self-respecting member of Parliament ought to think seriously about. As I listen to this debate, I would think that perhaps it would be a lot more convenient for all here assembled to simply dispense with the idea of bringing petitions to the chamber.

I say it's a matter of privilege because, as I watch the ebb and flow of things in this place over nearly two and a half decades, I just think I see more and more constraint on the opportunities for members of Parliament to do their duty as many of their constituents might imagine it to be done. I can understand how from time to time there will be materials brought and presented that do not conform with some antiseptic nicety imagined by some very finely focused bureaucrat. But I simply say again, as I take my seat, that as I listen to this discussion, I have to think, why would I bother to bring and present a petition from the people of the Ottawa Valley if I know in advance that it can only be presented if it meets with the approval of my good friends at the table, who will not be in many of these communities, as the previous speaker indicated, as the petition is gathered about?

The Speaker: That is not a point of privilege. I say to all members that the standing orders are very clear. The Speaker did not write the standing orders. They have been very clear in this regard. We've attempted to be flexible, and I believe all three House leaders have agreed on a procedure. I also will say—and I didn't say this in summing up—that we will attempt to be as flexible as possible on this, particularly in the beginning when there may be large numbers that will be coming. But the standing orders are very clear on this issue.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Just to add to this debate, you're quite right that there was an agreement between the three House leaders on this, although these concerns of course were expressed at the time. I think we would all expect there to be flexibility, especially at the beginning. I believe, however, that there are clearly problems and people don't support it. Perhaps members can start petitioning, in the proper format of course, all three House leaders of the Legislature to perhaps go back and revisit that particular item, because I believe people are expressing real concerns for their constituents to have the ability, in some cases, to write the petitions in the proper format.

The Speaker: To the member, it's not a point of order, and we will attempt to be flexible.
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Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Under standing order 38, I fail to see where it is complied with as yet or where we have a requirement to comply with the Clerk's desk before presenting petitions. As well, are we going to receive updated standing orders?

The Speaker: If you read the standing order—which I don't have in front of me, but the table is looking at it as we speak—it says that petitions will be in good order. If you give me a moment, I will read the standing order:

"Presentation in the House

"A member may present a petition in the House during routine proceedings under the proceeding 'Petitions'. The member may make a brief statement summarizing the contents of the petition and indicating the number of signatures attached thereto."

It goes on to say,

"Petitions to be certified as to form

"No member may seek to present a petition unless it has already been given to the Clerk of the Assembly who has examined it and certified that it is correct as to the form and content."

So I will say to members that the standing orders are very clear on this.

Mr Conway: On that point—

The Speaker: Order. I will say very clearly that these are the new standing orders.

Mr Conway: On that point, it will happen on many occasions that many of us as members will be presented with petitions—in some cases they will have hundreds of names—that will not conform with the precise language of the standing orders. Under these rules, I take it that the members in question will not be able to present those petitions in the normal course of events. They can simply return them to their constituents in Peterborough or Pembroke or Pefferlaw or wherever and say, "They don't conform with language you would have no reason to understand to begin with, and if you want them presented, then you'd better redo them consistent with this language." Is that the rule?

The Speaker: The member will know that sometimes we get situations where photocopies can be put in. The wording needs to be very clear. What could happen on occasion is that photocopies could be made and names could be put in that weren't there. So the standing orders are very clear about this procedure.

As I said to the member for Broadview-Greenwood, we will attempt to be as flexible as we can in this, including when the table is dealing with them in the beginning. But I want to be very clear to all members that these are the standing orders of the House. It is not the Speaker's responsibility to write the standing orders, and I did not. The standing orders are very clear. Our new standing orders have come in, which I have read to you, and they are very clear on petitions.

The member has another point of order, but before he does, I want to be very clear on this. The standing orders, in my estimation, are extremely clear.

Mr Conway: I don't doubt that they're clear. I'm not one who plays games with petitions. I understand only too well—

Interjections.

Mr Conway: I want to be fair about this. I understand, as a former government House leader, the games that have been played with petitions. I'm not here to be boastful. I don't play games with petitions. I can tell you that over the years about 50% of the petitions I would routinely receive would not meet this standard, and I am quite prepared to take the direction of the House. But I

can tell you that my advice to my constituents will be, "Save your effort." The petitioning process, which is one of the most fundamental in our system, is, for a very nice, bureaucratic requirement that I don't doubt has its supporters, not going to accord with the democratic life and times as you might understand it in your community.

I'm quite prepared to live with that. I think it's unfortunate.

The Speaker: Members will also know that there have been occasions when petitions have not been allowed to be tabled in the past. This is not something new. Some have been rejected, based on what has happened.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the goal of the House leaders, in terms of talking about this aspect of petitions, was that so many petitions were coming forward that were not in form and, therefore, while the petition was read in the House, there actually was never an official acknowledgement of that petition. In fact, what would happen would be that the petition would be returned to the member and there would be no record that the petition had been read, except that it was in Hansard. Therefore, I believe it was an effort on the part of the House leaders to try to make the practice more regular.

The other part was that a few members were not in fact presenting petitions of their constituents. They were using it as another opportunity to put forward a point of view which they had, and therefore they would write the petition and perhaps get a few people out back to sign the petition and were presenting it as a petition.

May I say that I would be open—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sterling: I don't believe there's a desire on the part of any of the House leaders to make the practice more restrictive in terms of people bringing in a petition to a member of the Legislature where it didn't conform strictly to form. Therefore I think we should ask the Legislative Assembly committee to look at it to try to make it more inclusive and less exclusive than it presently is in terms of the form. I'm quite willing to join with the other House leaders, and I'm sure that they would, in asking the Legislative Assembly committee, which is normally charged with looking at matters like this, to look into it and make a recommendation to the House leaders. Then we can talk about this matter again, at that time.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I appreciate the comments just made by our House leader and I think that more or less takes the sting out, but I really feel that the point that was made by the member from Nipissing-Pembroke is really the important one, that we can't in any way create any more barriers of access for people to this process. With all due respect, I'm not sure if the member from Davenport or the member from St Catharines or the member from Durham may have been in violation of that, but the point here is that, to have the table turn down, for a procedural issue, the will and the wishes to express the concerns of constituents—that's our job, and it's a primary requirement

for us to listen and speak on behalf of constituents. If there's a format error or a procedural kind of error, that to me is not sufficient grounds to stamp out the voice of the people.

So, with respect, I know our House leader and the other House leaders will work to find a formula where we can speak and represent our constituents.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: While I agree with the situation the House leaders have brought forward, the interesting thing we must keep at the forefront is that all of us, as members of this Legislature, must hold that it is incumbent on us that if we have constituents who wish to communicate a particular viewpoint to this Legislature, we should be the ones to assist these residents in formulating that particular legislative petition. That's incumbent upon us as members. I have done that; I know members of the opposition have done it. Where people wish to have an acceptable petition to this House, we have worked with them.

If I may make a suggestion, perhaps the rules around a petition could be circulated very clearly so that we as members would be able to assist our constituents in expressing their viewpoint.

The Speaker: I thank all the members for the points of order.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would like all members to join me in welcoming the second group of pages for the first session of the 37th Parliament: Brianna Baraniecki from Northumberland, Sarah Campbell from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, Adam Carricato from Sault Ste Marie, Patrick Cooke from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Dawn Crandlemire from Whitby-Ajax, Caroline Dennis from Windsor West, Lauren Duimering from Kitchener-Waterloo, Amanda Klarer from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, Kenneth Knibb from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Zacharie LeBlanc from Essex, Graham Leitch from London North Centre, Kumiko Mackasey from Don Valley West, Alan Medri from Parkdale-High Park, Katherine Monsma from Prince Edward-Hastings, Shaka O'Brian from Don Valley East, Kartik Senthilnathan from Mississauga West, Lauren Vancea from Niagara Falls, Laura Walter from Oak Ridges, Joshua Wang from Cambridge and Kurt Whittaker from Markham.

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PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition in fine form. It's from residents and constituents of my riding and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we, the consumers, feel gas prices are too high throughout Ontario;

"Whereas we, the consumers, support the Ontario Liberal caucus's attempt to have the Mike Harris government introduce predatory gas pricing legislation;

"Whereas we, the consumers, want the Mike Harris government to act so that the consumer can get a break at the pumps rather than going broke at them;

"Whereas we, the consumers, are fuming at being hosed at the pumps and want Mike Harris to gauge our anger;

"Furthermore, we, the consumers, want Mike Harris to know we want to be able to go to the pumps and fill our gas tanks without emptying our pockets;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce predatory gas pricing legislation in order to control the amount of money we, the consumers, are forced to pay at the gas pumps."

I affix my signature to this petition.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition from 4,000 constituents of the county of Essex, and today I'm assisted by a page from the county of Essex, Zach LeBlanc, in presenting this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Conservative government has gravely impacted the education of our students with special needs through the introduction of the special education funding formula and the subsequent freeze in funding;

"Whereas the children of Ontario, especially those requiring extra support, are being forced to accept lower levels of service while at the same time being expected to meet higher expectations by this government;

"Whereas each and every child deserves the right to learn to his or her potential;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Education and the Ontario Conservative government to make the necessary changes in the funding formula to see that every child has the support required to learn, especially our children with special needs. We petition the minister to listen to parents, teachers and school boards who have acted as strong advocates for these students."

In support, I add my signature to this petition.

PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICE

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): "Whereas the passenger train service in northeastern Ontario has reached a critical stage, with low passenger usage and spiralling operating costs; and

"Whereas it is now proposed to have the passenger train service downgraded and ultimately removed; and

"Whereas it is imperative that the passenger train service should be maintained to service the many isolated communities in northeastern Ontario as the population is

aging and in many cases it is the only means that seniors have to get to the major centres in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas it is essential that the train service be returned to a night schedule; and

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris stressed the need to continue passenger trains in the north when he wrote to a Cochrane citizen on June 25, 1993, stating in part as follows:

"I share your concerns regarding the fate of passenger rail service in northern Ontario. You and I both know this region's contribution to the province is invaluable. It is crucial that northern Ontario and southern Ontario be accessible to everyone and the railroad was providing a valuable service in this regard."

"Now, therefore, be it resolved that we, the concerned citizens of northeastern Ontario, respectfully request the Premier and the cabinet of the present Ontario government to impose an immediate 24-month moratorium on the removal of the passenger train service so that the government and the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission can look at viable alternatives."

I affix my name to this.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas early in September of 1995 there occurred a series of events involving the Premier of Ontario and members of his government, the Ontario Provincial Police and demonstrators representing members of the First Nations at Ipperwash Provincial Park;

"Whereas the events led to the death of Dudley George, one of the First Nations demonstrators;

"Whereas these events have raised concerns among all parties in the Legislature and many Ontarians;

"Whereas there has been introduced in the House a piece of legislation known as the Truth About Ipperwash Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"In order that there is an answer to concerns of the Legislature and Ontarians regarding the events at Ipperwash, the members of the Legislative Assembly vote in favour of the Truth About Ipperwash Act."

I affix my signature.

HIGHWAY BILLBOARDS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I have an important petition delivered to me by Ms Corinne Grann in Thunder Bay related to the Ministry of Transportation's insensitive and arbitrary decisions on erecting billboards in front of property. The petition reads, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the placement of the billboard erected on the easement in front of ML15 L6, Shuniah township, without the landowners' knowledge, we the undersigned protest such action; and

"Whereas the respect for the property owner in front of such easement was not given consideration; and

"Whereas this stretch of highway is hazardous enough with high incidences of traffic accidents, the distraction of such a structure will contribute to the problem that already exists. Safety concerns are a major aspect; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation should consult with the property owners in front of such easement, before giving permits for such structures to be erected; and

"Whereas a permanent structure that has been erected on an easement directly in front of a property that has not been approved by the affected property owner should be removed immediately;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the property owner's right to approve or disapprove of a permanent structure that may be erected on the easement in front of their property."

There are 180 people who have signed this petition. It's a major issue and I'm very pleased to support them in their concerns.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I wish to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. This petition is signed by 575 residents expressing their views about the governance of the Elgin-St Thomas Health Unit, and I wish to present this petition on their behalf.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE STREETS ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways / Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la sécurité en Ontario en interdisant la sollicitation agressive, la sollicitation de personnes dans certains lieux et le rejet de choses dangereuses dans certains lieux, et modifiant le Code de la route afin de réglementer certaines activités sur la chaussée.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 18, 1999, I'm now required to put the question on second reading of Bill 8. Mr Flaherty has moved second reading of Bill 8. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 18, 1999, this bill is referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

TAXPAYER PROTECTION
AND BALANCED BUDGET ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999
SUR LA PROTECTION
DES CONTRIBUABLES
ET L'ÉQUILIBRE BUDGÉTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 15, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 7, An Act to protect taxpayers against tax increases, to establish a process requiring voter approval for proposed tax increases and to ensure that the Provincial Budget is a balanced budget / *Projet de loi 7, Loi protégeant les contribuables des augmentations d'impôt, établissant un processus d'approbation des projets d'augmentation d'impôt par les électeurs et garantissant l'équilibre du budget provincial.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 17, 1999, I'm now required to put the question on second reading of Bill 7. Mr Harris has moved second reading of Bill 7. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 17, 1999, the order for third reading should now be called.

TAXPAYER PROTECTION
AND BALANCED BUDGET ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999
SUR LA PROTECTION
DES CONTRIBUABLES
ET L'ÉQUILIBRE BUDGÉTAIRE

Mr Klees, on behalf of Mr Harris, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to protect taxpayers against tax increases, to establish a process requiring voter approval for proposed tax increases and to ensure that the Provincial Budget is a balanced budget / *Projet de loi 7, Loi protégeant les contribuables des augmentations d'impôt, établissant un processus d'approbation des projets d'augmentation d'impôt par les électeurs et garantissant l'équilibre du budget provincial.*

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I will be splitting my time with Mr Skarica and Mr Wettlaufer.

I'm pleased to begin debate on this most important piece of legislation before the House, the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, 1999. This bill is drafted in two schedules, schedule A and schedule B, both of which are dependent upon each other to ensure fiscal responsibility to the taxpayers of this province.

I'd like to start out by referring to the balanced budget portion of this legislation and I'd like to read, for the benefit of the House, the article that I believe sets out very succinctly what this legislation is all about: "For each fiscal year beginning on or after April 1, 2001, the executive council shall plan for a balanced budget in which the expenditures of the province for a fiscal year do not exceed the sum of the revenues and the accumulated net surplus for the year and the Minister of Finance shall present a balanced budget."

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The very fact that a piece of legislation like this is having to come before this House is an indication of the kind of government we have had over the last number of years, leading up to 1995 when we were elected to serve the people of Ontario, in this province. As you will well recall, the deficit in this province was strangling not only government but the very services that we as a government are called upon to deliver to the people of the province.

I think there is something very important here that we need to be reminded of, and that is the degree to which governments continue to mount up deficits; that is, spending more than they have. That amount of deficit continues to be added to the debt of the province. The fact that today we continue to have a debt in this province well in excess of \$100 billion—when we were elected the deficit in this province was approaching \$11 billion. That simply meant that every year governments continued to mount up deficits, \$11 billion was added to the debt.

I recall in the election campaign one of the great thrusts of the opposition, primarily the Liberal Party at the time, was accusing this government of providing tax cuts, and yet during that same period of time the actual debt of the province continued to increase. Somehow this was supposed to be interpreted as a profound statement by the opposition.

Every constituent I spoke with could very readily understand that, yes, of course, until such time as our government was able to manage the financial affairs of our province in such a way that we eliminated the deficit, that we balanced the budget, there would continue to be an amount left over at the end of the year that would have to be added to the debt. That's simple, pretty fundamental economics. And, yes, had we not continued to approach the issue of the deficit, then not only would the debt have increased by perhaps \$2 billion or \$3 billion, it would have been another \$25 billion greater, had we not implemented the kind of policies we did.

The good news is that as a result of the fiscal policies of our government, as a result of the initiative of cutting taxes at all levels in this province, we were able to ignite economic activity. That economic activity resulted in the creation of some 650,000 new jobs in this province. That in turn created more economic activity and today we have the privilege in this House to be looking towards a balanced budget imminently in this province.

For the first time in many years we will be able to go to the people of the province with a budget and demon-

strate that the very difficult decisions we have taken as a government in all ministries—there isn't a ministry that was protected from the scrutiny of Management Board, from the scrutiny of cabinet, from the scrutiny of our caucus in terms of saying: "How can we do more with less? How and where can we be cutting expenses in this government to ensure the sustainability of services and the sustainability of good government?"

The rest is history. We took those difficult steps, and continue to do that, in the public interest, in the interest of the people we serve. We are on the doorstep of a balanced budget.

More importantly, we are now at the point where, because of that fiscal policy, we'll be able to begin to pay down the debt of this province and give true hope not only to business people, to men and women and young people, but to future generations as well. Because we know that only through fiscal responsibility will we be able to provide the kind of services that people in our province have come to expect, top-quality health care and the best education not only in this country but internationally. People come to this country from around the world because of the reputation Ontario has of providing a high standard of living, the best quality of life anywhere in the world. Our commitment as a government is to ensure that we continue to provide the people of Ontario with the services they have come to enjoy.

We have come through many years when governments have been insensitive to the needs not only of the general population but of business and, as a result, businesses were starting to leave Ontario. There was a lack of confidence. There was a lack of initiative in terms of investing in their own businesses, and businesses were saying, "Why should we stay in Ontario when we're going to be taxed to death here, when for every dollar we invest the government is going to claw back 60% to 70%?" Other places were rolling out the red carpet. Here in Ontario, we were rolling out the red tape. I heard from many people in my own constituency who said: "If there hadn't been a change in the economic environment, in the legislative environment and in the regulatory environment in this province, we wouldn't have stayed here. We had choices, and other jurisdictions around the world were beckoning to businesses in Ontario." In fact there were provincial leaders who were coming to Ontario to entice our business owners to come to their jurisdictions because they realized what the previous NDP and Liberal governments had done to constrict their ability to function and basically to strangle businesses where they were.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business did a survey in April this year. I often hear from members opposite, particularly from the NDP and most recently from the Liberal Party as well, that our government has continued to give benefits to our so-called rich friends, and that somehow all that business wants is to be given handouts from government. I tell you that that is not reality. The truth is that business in this province isn't looking for handouts. They're not looking for grants.

That is what other governments in the past thought that business wanted and, of course, they created programs to hand out grants. And if the government creates a program to hand out money, what business person in his right mind wouldn't take it? But that's not what business wants at all. What business wants is for government to get off their backs, for government to simply create a level playing field where they can go out and do business, where they can enterprise, where they can invest and expect a reasonable return, without government interference.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business survey results are very clear: 83.6% of respondents said that their top priority for tax policy is to reduce payroll taxes. The second item on their list of priorities was to reduce income taxes, some 81.6%. The third item was to pay down the federal debt to reduce tax pressure, 81.2%. It's very clear what the desire of business is, and it's not for a government handout, it's not for make-work projects, because over 10 years, the lost decade as it has been referred to, that's exactly what governments in this province tried to do. They were well-meaning, but they were wrong-headed.

1530

The results were very clear: When you give businesses money, when you give them grants, when you give them credits, that is not going to be productive to the economic activity in the province; but when you give them a fair business environment, an environment in which they can invest their money and expect a reasonable return, they'll create jobs. Yes, they'll create profits. In turn, most business people I know are willing to reinvest a good portion of that profit back into the business. That's why we have seen the kind of growth that we have in the province over the last number of years.

Interesting as well, on the same survey, down the list to the area of increasing grants and subsidies, only 12% of respondents said that was important to them. Improve access to government procurement: 10% of the respondents referred to that. So it's clear.

I'm pleased that our government has had the courage to introduce this bill which will acutely make it illegal for future governments to run a deficit. It will be a requirement on all future governments in this province to bring in balanced budgets. That's what every business person in this province who has the responsibility to oversee and manage a business is forced to do every year. If they don't, they go out of business very quickly.

This bill also, in schedule A, requires that this government put in place some consequences for ministers not coming forward with a balanced budget. There has been some suggestion from the opposition that this is not a significant, important aspect of this legislation, that ministers and the Premier, who have the responsibility for overseeing the budget, be given very direct, specific consequences for not doing their job: a 25% reduction in the stipend that ministers get paid for the work they do.

My honourable colleague has said very clearly that there's no way he wants to experience that consequence.

But we know the most important consequence to us as ministers is not the 25%; the most important consequence to not balancing a budget is to put us back in the days of the Liberal and the NDP governments, when there was an erosion of confidence in the guidance and in the management ability of government. What effect does that have on the people in our constituencies? What effect does that have on the businesses which look to us to provide them with that kind of fiscal guidance?

I want to also say that very clearly this legislation before us, which then will make it a legal requirement for our government to bring in a balanced budget, will set some very clear terms, will make it effectively illegal for us to increase taxes. We have to go back to the taxpayers, to the voters of this province, before taxes in most categories can actually be increased.

Does that exclude the members of this House, the members of this government, from making decisions in the public interest? I would like to refer to a letter I received from a constituent, the Rev Bruce Ervin, who cautions, I believe rightfully so, in a letter to me and to my colleagues. He refers to the fact that "Balanced budgets and deficit budgets are neither inherently good nor inherently bad." In one way, I agree with him. He goes on to say: "These are merely tools for administering the financial affairs of the province. Sometimes one is called for, sometimes the other, depending on economic and social conditions at any given time."

I agree that there are times when, perhaps because it is in the public interest, exceptions have to be made to the given rule, and that's why even this legislation provides for special circumstances in the event, perhaps, of a natural disaster. When in a particular ministry we have to spend some additional money in the public interest, those exceptions are allowed for.

At the end of the day I and my colleagues, you included, Speaker, are sent here to make decisions in the public interest. We have a responsibility to do no less here than men and women are expected to do in their household budgets and in their business budgets, and that is to guard carefully so that we are good stewards of the resources with which we've been entrusted. We have been entrusted with managing the affairs of this province. Our government is committed through this legislation to do precisely that, not to spend more than we have and to ensure that all the good services people in this province have become accustomed to, health care, education, social services—that we can help those who cannot help themselves. If we're to do that for generations to come, in this generation, in this government, we owe it to the people of this province to pass this legislation and to do the kind of business we've been sent here to do, and that is the responsible business of government.

I thank you for the opportunity and I look forward, with other members of this Legislature, to enacting this legislation that will benefit Ontarians for generations to come.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I'm just here on a point of order. I believe we

have consent that the time will be split equally among the three parties and that the time Mr Klees has used, approximately 18 minutes, will come off the some 52 minutes which each party has.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Do you agree? It's agreed.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): Just a further note with the government House leader: I will be sharing my time, Mr Speaker, to let you know, with the members from Sarnia-Lambton, Prince Edward-Hastings and Hamilton East.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): St Catharines.

Mr Ramsay: Not the member from St Catharines, as the former Speaker would like to hear him speak in this House.

I'd like to take this opportunity this afternoon in our debate of this taxation bill to talk about some of the issues that relate to taxation that some of my constituents have been talking to me about as of late.

We had the opportunity because of Remembrance Day, two weeks ago, to spend the week in the riding. I think a lot of people would be interested to know that my riding is about 700 kilometres long and all the communities tend to be in that corridor, starting at one end through to the other. It's not like all the people just live in one end of the area, so having that week is well founded, and I thank House leaders in the past who've made that week possible so we could spend that time.

In that week you take advantage of it and go to various community events. On the Monday of that week I attended a meeting in a new town, for me, Matheson, which is about 50 miles north of Kirkland Lake in the riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane. There, the French separate school board is starting its school closure review process. They're being forced to do that. In order that taxes be cut, expenditures had to be cut, and now with the education bill that was passed in the last Parliament, school boards such as that are faced with a square footage funding formula that means many of our small rural schools in northern Ontario are going to be forced to close.

This particular school, école Sainte-Thérèse in Ramore, just south of Matheson, is embarking upon this process. If it does close, what it's going to mean is that because this board has junior kindergarten, three- and four- and five-year-olds will be on a school bus away from their mothers and their homes for over two hours a day every day during the school year. That's on a piece of highway in northern Ontario that can get quite treacherous, the highway being Highway 11, or they have the opportunity to take a back road from Ramore to Val Gagné, to the alternative school they would attend, and that's just as dangerous.

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I think it points out the fact that while the government wants to have more control over school boards and has devised such strict formulae for how the schools are to be funded, it overlooks the particular situations that we

have, especially in rural Ontario and again especially in rural northern Ontario, where our population is spread over a very vast area. In our very small communities are some very small neighbourhood schools, and when you close one of those, you basically close the community, because the only reason you would want to live in Ramore, in your final decision—it's a great community to live in, it's very close to some of the new mines that are being developed along the Highway 101 corridor between Quebec and Timmins and it's a great place to raise a family, but if we don't have a school for our young children, then there's really no point in establishing a household there. In the end, family after family will make that decision and no longer want to settle in Ramore. Basically that will be the end of the community if they lose that school.

That's the type of decision that our great, large boards of northeastern Ontario are now being forced to make, decisions, because of a square-footage formula, that threaten a community and also put our children at risk. Many studies have shown that children who, from their elementary years into high school, have to be bused for hours and hours on end have a much higher dropout rate in secondary school than those who are able to walk to school or have less than a 30-minute school bus drive.

As I said, these children would be on the highway more than two hours. First of all, children that young shouldn't be bused any more than about 15 minutes. They live in this town, and that school should remain open. I would ask that the Minister of Education revisit that formula as it applies to northern rural schools and its impact upon northern communities. I think it's necessary to take a look at that, and I'd ask her to do that. As she wants to save taxpayers' money, as I know this government does, we still have to think of our citizens.

Another area of taxpayer money where I know this government wants to try to save was the subject of the petition I introduced in the House earlier this afternoon, which had about 700 signatures on it. A lot of members probably don't know the government runs a railway in northeastern Ontario. The Ontario Northland Transportation Commission is a government of Ontario agency, headquartered in North Bay. Originally, through its act of 1906, it was given the responsibility of being the economic development agency for northeastern Ontario and the transportation development agency for the great northeast, and in doing so, it established a train route up through northern Ontario. It completed a route that had already been started as early as 1903, when it got to the town of Cobalt. That's when silver was discovered, when the train route was being constructed through Cobalt.

There's a lot of history to the Ontario Northland transportation system and its railway line that links North Bay through all the northeastern Ontario communities, terminating at Hearst. It also serves, at its third-last stop north, at Cochrane, which is a main terminus for the railway, as a linkage to the other Ontario Northland transportation train, which basically connects the rest of Ontario with our James Bay frontier. As you know, there

is no highway up to Moosonee, and rail and air travel are the only means of transporting goods and people from Timmins and Cochrane to Moosonee and Moose Factory.

So it's a very important part of our history, but it's also a very important part of our day-to-day reality in that, as the petition stated, many of our seniors use the train service to access medical care in southern Ontario, which we have to do because of the lack of specialists in northeastern Ontario. The train provides more comfortable accommodation for senior citizens, allowing them some room to move, to be able to get up and stretch, and makes the trip to Toronto a lot more comfortable for them.

The problem—and why some of us haven't been establishing a do-or-die campaign on this train—is that over the years the train has been allowed to suffer and to downgrade. What we now have is a third-rate train that not very many people use any more, and thus the rationale to cancel it.

What is really needed is a reinvention of that train service by putting in proper, modern railcars. Over a year ago I requested the transportation commission to take a look at ultramodern railcars—possibly double-decker cars built in Ontario, maybe by Bombardier in Thunder Bay, one of the best train manufacturers in the world—and instead of supporting and subsidizing a losing proposition, to run the rail service as a business, to basically create, as you do in any business, a profit centre.

There will be many opportunities to put profit centres on that train, such as a variety of dining experiences—fine dining being one of them—a proper bar car and also the introduction of casinos on that train. So rather than just sitting there and looking at the great scenery, which is wonderful, as the train travels up from Toronto in the evening, there would be entertainment and an opportunity for passengers who have the means to spend money on that train and thus have the riders subsidize the railway rather than the taxpayers.

I was trying to think like the government here and say that we have to run things more like a business. Because it is a responsibility of the government to run this agency and have the train, I felt that might be the way to do it.

The Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, to be fair to them, aren't business people. It has grown up to be quite a bureaucracy over the years. They know fairly well how to run trains, but they're not entrepreneurial and it would be a cultural shift for them to try to do that. Rightfully so, I would ask that maybe they entertain privatizing that aspect of the train. They could run the train but talk to some of the tour agencies to operate the different facilities on the train to make it profitable and attractive.

The opportunity there would be to reinvent this train as a tourism development tool for northeastern Ontario, with the amenities I have stated. I have also suggested putting a snowmobile car on that train so that a couple could get on the train in Orillia or Barrie on a Friday night, their snow vehicle would be loaded on that car, they could go in and have a drink before dinner, go into

the fine dining car if they wished to do so and then go upstairs afterwards to the casino. We would increase the number of tourists coming to northeastern Ontario. We would be generating revenue from the ridership to support that train that would also provide transportation for those of less means who need to come to Toronto for medical reasons and to visit family, and certainly rely on a good public transit system.

For us, since we don't have TTC because we don't live in a densely populated area, the Ontario Northland Railway, the Northlander, is basically our public transit. We move from town to town and from the north to the south. That is our transit system. In a sense, that's our GO system; it's just a longer ride. But it means we can visit family, see doctors that are needed and do business in southern Ontario. That's another area I'd ask the government to look at.

In the next few days I'm going to be introducing a private member's bill that speaks to another big issue affecting the economy of northeastern Ontario, and that is the number of Quebec workers who are basically stealing Ontario jobs. Unlike the bill last spring, which addressed this situation with regard to the construction industry, in my case in northeastern Ontario, and to a lesser degree to the rest of northern Ontario, Quebec workers are stealing our mining jobs, our tree-cutting jobs and our log-hauling jobs. It's very sad to see trees cut in our forest that are going to an Ontario mill being transported by a Quebec transport truck to that mill in, for instance, Cochrane or Iroquois Falls. It's very sad to see, with our high unemployment rate, Quebec people taking this work.

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I as a Canadian believe in labour mobility in this country; it's a principle that I would fight for. So I really hesitated in bringing such a bill across, but the fact is that Ontario workers in these industries, for whatever reason, do not get work in Quebec. The best example is to go back to Highway 101, which links Rouyn-Noranda and Timmins, where all these gold mines have been established over the last few years. Noranda Inc has a mine just north of Kirkland Lake on this highway and about 50% of the workers there come from Quebec. Noranda obviously has a mine also in Rouyn-Noranda, on the Quebec side, and there's not an Ontario worker in that mine.

I would certainly invite Quebec workers to come and work with us and share in our employment if we could do the same in Quebec. But the fact is that is not possible. Like this government did with construction workers, because of the great work of Jean-Marc Lalonde last year in this House in defending the rights of the workers of Ottawa and eastern Ontario, I wish to do the same for the workers in my area. This new riding, the northern part of it, is especially hard hit by these circumstances.

I know many of the companies up there that hire Quebec workers are now showing some interest in the bill that I'm doing, and I'm sure some of them are showing a little concern, I might say. But that's fine, because I'm here to work with my constituents and to

work for them and for their families. It really hurts when a Quebec trucker comes over and lives in his truck for a week and takes his paycheque back home and doesn't invest any of that money into our communities. That hurts especially when I have many of my truck drivers and tree cutters and miners unemployed, so it's a double insult and it hurts our communities.

I've been working with the Minister of Labour on this and I hope that he will take this as a friendly amendment to his present bill, although it can stand free-standing, and either adopt my bill or introduce a similar one of his own. It doesn't matter how it's done, but I think it's a situation that has to be addressed.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): At the outset, I just want to say that our time will be shared equally between the member from Hamilton and the leader of the NDP.

I want to take a few minutes at the beginning of the debate just to have an opportunity to comment. I was listening earlier to the debate, I forget the member from across the way, the honourable government whip who talked about how this government was close to balancing its budget. I couldn't help but think about where we would be today in the province of Ontario if the government hadn't adopted its tax break policy that it has put in place. As we know, the government decided early on, before the election of 1995, to run on a policy that said Ontarians would get a 30% tax break.

We have to recognize that there has been a cost associated with that tax cut. I think that if you asked the question straight up, "Do you want a tax cut?" most Ontarians would probably say yes. But I think it's incumbent upon us to talk a little bit about what that tax break has meant when it comes to government services and when it comes to where we are with the deficit of Ontario today.

To put it mildly, the tax cut has probably cost in revenue to the province of Ontario somewhere around, depending on whose numbers you look at, \$3 billion to \$5 billion. The government would argue that no, we didn't lose anything because the tax break stimulated the economy into getting more investment in the province and therefore whatever was lost by way of revenue in the tax cut was offset by gains that they made in job creation. The reality is that, tax cut or no tax cut, the economy of Ontario would have done well for the last three or four years, specifically in southern Ontario. The reason for that is that the American economy has done well since the mid-1990s, and there were certainly signs of that, where the revenue was starting to pick up in the province, dating back to 1993-94. If the government had not gone ahead and dealt with the issue of trying to give a tax cut, the government would have had that money by way of savings in revenue and we'd now be in a position, I would argue, that we would have balanced our budget probably about three years ago.

Ontario is one of the few jurisdictions across Canada, as a province, that has yet to balance its books. I think we need to recognize that the reason why that is so is because the Mike Harris government decided to give—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: If you don't know the difference between debt and deficit, you shouldn't be sitting in this Legislature.

Why is it that we still have at this point a deficit on the books this year? Because the government decided to give the tax cut. It added to the deficit. It's put us in a position where we now have a deficit where we probably wouldn't have had one about three years ago because we would have been in a position to balance. But the government now, because of this tax cut, has had to go out and find other ways to cut into government services to make up for the money that they're losing by way of revenue.

We would know that just last week there was a Toronto Star article that appeared and said, "It is rumoured that the government is going to cut some \$900 million yet again in government services in the province of Ontario." Hastily, the government ran back to the House in the afternoon and announced: "No, it's not really \$900 million, it's only \$300 million this year with another \$600 million to come over the next few years. It's not as bad as people were once led to believe." The reality is, it doesn't matter how you try to cut the mustard, at the end of the day we are going to have to cut more and more programs in Ontario because the government continues to persist with the policy that it put in place in 1995 when it comes to the tax cut.

You ask yourself, how does this affect everyday life as far as the cuts that have happened up to now and where they're going? I just want to take a few minutes and talk a little bit about this last weekend, the opportunity that I had to travel through part of my riding. Being a large riding like mine, Timmins-James Bay, we don't have constituency offices in each community. It's not like many of the ridings in Ontario, places like Toronto and Ottawa, where your riding is geographically situated such that if you plunk your constituency office in the middle of it, people can get on a bicycle and ride to your constituency office to tell you about their problems. In our riding you don't have that luxury, because from one end of the riding to the other it is basically a lot farther than people would imagine. The actual size of the riding in kilometres is somewhere around 1,000 from the southern part of the riding to the northern part of the riding, followed by about 600 to 700 kilometres across. You can't ride your bicycle across that, so as a provincial member we hold what's called community clinics.

This last weekend I had the opportunity on Saturday to hold community clinics in the community of Moonbeam and the community of Opatatika. It's interesting to note that the people who came out to these clinics were talking about the problems they were having in their everyday lives. You know what? It didn't matter if you were in Moonbeam and it didn't matter if you were in Opatatika, they were all basically saying the same thing: My life today is much more complicated because of what's happened with the provincial government over the last four or five years.

I had one woman who came to me in Moonbeam to tell me about problems she's having with municipal planning. There is a quarry that was allowed to be built on a property right next to her, and because of the changes to the Planning Act on the part of the Minister of Municipal Affairs in 1995, she had absolutely no say about the zoning being changed in her own backyard, literally, and a quarry was allowed to go into operation even though she was opposed to it. She didn't even have an opportunity to object. When she wrote to the Ontario Municipal Board after the decision was made to go ahead with the quarry, the Ontario Municipal Board said: "Your application is vexatious. Under the changes to the omnibus bill, Bill 26, you don't have the right to have access to the file." So this poor woman has a quarry built next door to her, 600 feet away, she had no opportunity to comment, and when she tries to find out more information in order to make some comment on it, she's told by the municipal board that she can't have the file.

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I have another individual who comes in who tells me about the problem that he's having. I don't want to get into the details because it's fairly dramatic and fairly personal, but let me just say that this individual having to deal with the mental health system has really had a lot of hard times because of all the cuts that have happened to the mental health field over the last four or five years. Here's this poor individual who went through a traumatic event about four years ago that drove him a little bit off the deep end. The guy had a hard time trying to deal with reality where it was, had to get in contact with the mental health services in our riding, and because of the cuts on the part of the provincial government—it was always difficult to get access to those types of services before, but now it's even more difficult. This poor individual had a lot to say about what had happened to him and how he would like to see the issues resolved so that people who have happen to them what happened to him don't have to go through the experiences he did.

Je m'en vais à Opatatika puis j'ai la chance de parler à des individus qui me disent qu'ils ont un problème. Un soir je m'en vais rencontrer le club de l'Âge d'or d'Opatatika, un club d'une soixantaine de personnes âgées de cette communauté qui se rassemblent pour un peu de détente, pour avoir la chance de se parler, pour causer ensemble. Il y a un beau petit centre. Ils ont pris ce qui était le presbytère dans le passé et c'est devenu un centre de loisirs pour les personnes âgées de cette communauté.

Ils ne veulent pas avoir beaucoup. Ils veulent avoir environ 8000 \$ pour changer la fournaise et pour être capables de faire des réparations très minimes sur la bâtisse pour avoir la capacité d'utiliser ce centre en hiver et continuer de passer ces bons temps ensemble. Aucune offre provinciale n'est disponible pour le club de l'Âge d'or d'Opatatika ou n'importe quel autre club en Ontario. Pourquoi ? Parce que le gouvernement de Mike Harris a fallu couper les subventions aux groupes comme ce club

pour pouvoir payer pour les changements de taxation que le gouvernement a donné il y a deux ou trois ans.

J'ai eu la chance de rencontrer encore un autre groupe à Opasatika. La municipalité dans ce cas-là a dit : « Écoutez, on a une vingtaine de femmes dans notre communauté qui sont veuves qui ne veulent plus demeurer dans leur maison. Elles se trouvent à un point dans leur vie où elles aimeraient déménager dans un appartement pour avoir un peu plus de sécurité et rester ensemble avec d'autres personnes de leur âge, et en même temps cela leur donnerait la chance de vendre leur maison, ce qui ferait beaucoup de logis pour la communauté. Il y a du monde qui voudrait aller à Opasatika pour y faire leur chez-eux.

Encore, ça veut dire que dans le passé des personnes feraient une application auprès du ministère du Logement pour avoir du financement pour bâtir ce qu'on appelle un « seniors' housing project ». Ce qui est arrivé, c'est qu'en 1995 le gouvernement de Mike Harris a complètement fermé le ministère du Logement en ce qui concerne bâtir des maisons à but non lucratif. Il n'y en a plus. Les pauvres personnes à Opasatika n'ont jamais eu d'appartements pour les personnes de l'âge d'or dans leur communauté et n'ont pas même l'habilité de faire une application pour bâtir des appartements dans leur communauté. Le gouvernement de Mike Harris en 1995 a complètement fermé le financement de ces programmes.

Je continue sur la route et je rencontre du monde à Hearst. Je rencontre un homme qui veut trouver un emploi. Il se trouve dans une situation où il a perdu son job, il n'a plus d'assurance-chômage et il lui a fallu aller sur le bien-être social. Il veut commencer une entreprise, pas une grosse ; il veut acheter un camion pour être capable de participer dans l'économie, pour charrier des « logs » d'un bord de la forêt pour aller au moulin à Hearst. Le monsieur n'a pas d'argent et doit, comme tout le monde, aller à la banque pour en emprunter. Il était prêt à donner sa maison en guise de sécurité pour acheter son camion. Mais la banque a dit que non, ce n'était pas assez de sécurité. Le pauvre homme, qui est sur le bien-être social, quelles chances est-ce qu'il a ? Il a déjà été à travers des programmes comme boulot Ontario du gouvernement de M. Rae et STEP du gouvernement de M. Peterson.

Ces programmes donnaient l'habilité à ces individus de faire l'investissement pour donner les connaissances nécessaires pour commencer une entreprise, et dans certains cas d'avoir même l'argent pour pouvoir commencer une entreprise. Ce pauvre monsieur se trouve dans une situation où il n'y a aucun programme pour l'aider. Il n'y a pas boulot Ontario, où on peut utiliser son bien-être social pour créer son propre job. Il n'y a plus de programme « heritage », qui était un fonds de 25 \$ millions à 30 \$ millions par année où un individu pourrait aller au gouvernement avoir des garanties sur un emprunt. Ces programmes n'existent plus pour ces personnes. Ceci est seulement une indication de ce qui est arrivé durant une journée dans mon comté ce samedi-là.

Si tu vas à Moonbeam ou à Opasatika ou à Hearst, c'est toujours la même histoire : le monde vient te voir et te parle d'où ils se trouvent dans leur vie quotidienne. Ce qu'on apprend est que ce monde se trouve pire aujourd'hui quand ça vient aux opportunités dans cette économie à la descente depuis 1995, et pourquoi ? Parce qu'il a fallu au gouvernement de Mike Harris de couper les programmes provinciaux pour s'assurer d'avoir de l'argent pour la réduction d'impôts qu'il a donnée à la population ontarienne. Est-il populaire d'avoir des réductions d'impôts ? Oui, monsieur le Président. Vous en tant que Président et moi en tant que député ou M. ou M^{me} Tout le monde dans la rue voulons tous avoir des réductions d'impôts. Mais il y a des coûts dans cette affaire-là. À la fin de la journée on paie de l'autre bord.

And it's not even to talk about what happens to user fees. Do you recognize how many user fees exist in Ontario today, since 1995? I was listening to the member for St Catharines: 653 new taxes that this government has raised over the last six years, from 1995, and most of them, I would say 100% of them, by way of user fees. Children who go out and play hockey—unfortunately, I was at the hospital visiting my father, who was ill this last week, and I was talking with one individual who has been involved with minor hockey for years in my community, Condo Pontello. Condo said to me, “We used to be able to rent the ice in order to promote hockey in our community for X dollars.” The ice time that clubs now have to pay, since 1995, has about doubled. It means that those kids are having to go out, either through their parents or by way of fund-raising, and pay those additional user fees that the government has put on.

Yes, the government can stand here and try to take all the credit it does for the economy and everything else, but they have to take credit for what they've done wrong. That is, their tax cut has basically cost us when it comes to provincial services and also cost us when it comes to user fees. There's nothing for free in this world. I think we're going to start to find, over the next few years, that the legacy Mike Harris is leaving us is a pretty sad legacy when it comes to what it means to people's lives on a daily basis.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'm pleased to speak to the Taxpayer Protection Act, Bill 7. It's heartening to listen to the members of the opposition speak in favour of the bill, that they will support it. It is a little disheartening to hear the members from the third party say they are opposed to it. But even knowing that the members of the opposition are going to support the bill, I notice they still speak with some reservation. They say they'll support it, but on the other hand they're opposed to it. They point to all kinds of reasons why it won't work. This, to me, indicates one more example of how Liberals are opposed to restricting spending. They really would like to have the flexibility to increase spending—not like what we say, that the bill allows it in times of war or in times of severe economic downturn. They would like to be able to increase spending much more at will.

The taxpayers in my riding recognized even before the 1995 election that we could not continue to increase the debt in this province. They recognized that annual deficits increased the size of the debt. They recognized that we were paying out \$9 billion a year in interest charges on the accumulated debt. That money was affecting the amount of money that a provincial government could provide for health care and education. Funding for these two items was felt very severely in my riding of Kitchener Centre, in which at the time two hospitals were located. Now one, because of restructuring, is in Kitchener-Waterloo.

We had severe underfunding during the terms of the two previous governments for hospitalization and health care. In my riding, we had so many people who didn't have doctors. We still have that shortage, but it's gradually being rectified. We had no health care that was what our riding should have had, a region that is so economically important. We had a shortage of cancer care, we had a shortage of MRIs, we had a shortage of cardiac care, we had a shortage of psychiatric care, and the list goes on and on. A region with a \$14-billion gross domestic product, the equivalent of the province of New Brunswick, greater than the provinces of Newfoundland and PEI together, but we didn't have proper health care. Money that we could have used was going to pay interest on the debt.

1610

The Liberals like to say that our government could have reduced the debt faster if we hadn't cut taxes. Let's examine this. We could have reduced the debt faster if we had restricted spending on health care to what the Liberals promised in 1995 in their red book. Do you remember that, Mr Speaker? I'm sure you do. Their red book said, "... spending of \$17 billion a year on health care." What is being spent in Ontario today? Some \$20.6 billion. Our government has increased health care spending to \$20.6 billion, \$3.6 billion more than the opposition party would have spent. Yes, we could have balanced the budget this year. Let's look at it another way.

The NDP said we shouldn't have cut taxes, because if we hadn't cut taxes we could have balanced the budget. Is that right? Two thirds of the tax cut has gone to families earning between \$25,000 and \$75,000 a year. This is the majority of the consumers in this province. They have, through their increased spending patterns over the last four years, increased consumer demand, increased incentive to invest. They have—the tax cuts I'm talking about—improved the economy because this group of people spent money. When you spend money, you create demand. When you create demand, you provide jobs. When you provide jobs, you increase provincial revenue. When you increase provincial revenue, you then have more money to spend on health care and on education.

We recently fought a provincial election and this issue came up at the door over and over again. The people of my riding understand it. In fact, most of the people of

Ontario understand that. The only ones who don't understand it seem to be the Liberals and the NDP.

We were elected in 1995 because we listened to Ontarians, who said they wanted lower taxes. Why? I mentioned consumer demand already, but higher taxes increase the brain drain because they reduce incentive. Higher taxes reduce incentive to be productive, reduce incentive to invest. Investment creates jobs. Jobs. Isn't that what this is all about?

I remember in 1995 the people of Ontario considered their number one priority jobs. While our economy is getting stronger, nevertheless it is very tenuous. With the effect of the global economy that we have had over the last five to 10 years, most people in this province realize that people in other countries can be just as productive as or can be more productive than members of our own province can be, or they can produce some things at terrifically reduced costs because wage rates are so low. We have a major challenge in that. The global economy puts tremendous strains on us, and because of those tremendous strains we have to ensure that while our people have a good standard of living and while they have good social benefits, they need the incentive. We cannot increase taxes.

What does the Taxpayer Protection Act do? It ensures that there will not be irresponsible tax increases by a future provincial government. It does not permit tax increases without a referendum. Is that so wrong, to go to the members of the public, to our constituents? Is it so wrong to ask them for their approval before increasing taxes? I believe the people of this province are intelligent enough, sophisticated enough, that they can judge for themselves whether or not their government should increase taxes. It seems reasonable.

Would a future government be so irresponsible as to increase taxes if we didn't pass this legislation? I will ask, what has Jean Chrétien said very recently? Our Prime Minister, and a Liberal, said: "If you looked at only one aspect, taxes, maybe you would prefer living elsewhere. There's nothing forcing you to stay here." He said that on August 8. Our Prime Minister. That's only a couple of months ago. I would say that indicates that without passage of this legislation, we could very easily have a future government increase taxes irresponsibly.

Again I say to you, our commitment is to reduce taxes. There must no longer be irresponsible deficits. The people of this province must not be forced to pay for irresponsible deficits run up by irresponsible governments. My children and their children should not be forced to pay for irresponsibility on the part of governments of our generation.

Again I say, we must increase initiative, we must increase productivity. That is the role of government, through tax cuts. This ensures our commitment to tax cuts. This act ensures our commitment to balanced budgets. This act ensures our protection for the taxpayers of Ontario.

I will be supporting this act.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): At the outset I want to say that it's a pleasure to speak to this bill, the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, because it's a concept I agree with. I have to say, who wouldn't agree with such a statement?

I will say again that it's the style of the government to look back and remind everyone of past records and consistently divert responsibility to others. A true aspect of taxpayer protection is, in my opinion, all about accountability. In the recent auditor's report, it is clear that accountability is not provided by the style of this government.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: You would know that we have had a change in the standing orders. I wonder if you can tell me how many people it takes to have a quorum in this House nowadays, because I believe we don't have one.

The Deputy Speaker: I am not entitled to answer questions like that, but if you would like me to check and see, I will.

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Mr Bisson: Then I would call for a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you check to see if there's a quorum present, please.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair again recognizes the member for Sarnia-Lambton.

Ms Di Cocco: Again, I'll say that it's the style of this government to look back and of course remind everybody of past records. They consistently divert responsibility to others. A true aspect of taxpayer protection, in my opinion, is all about accountability. In the recent auditor's report, it's clear that accountability is not provided by the style of this government. This government is great at producing the appearance of accountability, but in reality it is something else.

I agree with the member for Oak Ridges that we all have been elected to protect and represent the interests of our constituents and that accountability is, in reality, the best protection for taxpayers.

I will cite some examples from the auditor's report about value for money, because that is what accountability is all about as well.

The Ministry of Health provided \$7.1 billion to operate public hospitals, with \$246 million for one-time costs incurred by the hospitals. In addition, the health capital program provided financial assistance to hospitals for the cost of approved capital construction. In the 1998-99 fiscal year, the ministry did not have in place the key findings from the audit about payment to public hospitals—and accountability framework, delineating the roles and responsibilities of both the ministry and the hospitals.

What was lacking was a mechanism to monitor and assess the impact of restructuring. So you're going to restructure, and accountability is figuring out if the

restructuring is working or not. This government doesn't seem to have that in place.

Accountability about systems to fund hospitals based on demand for services—so if you have a demand but you're not providing the services, then you're not meeting, I call it, the accountability factor. There are consistent criteria, or should be, for providing financial assistance to hospitals experiencing financial difficulties, because hospitals are not in the business of making a profit. There's also another area, and that is indicators to measure and report on the performance of the public hospital system in delivering quality services, and we don't have those measures.

Taxpayers' protection is also how the government is spending money and what services we're getting for this money. I'm going to read a letter from a constituent who is today feeling the consequences of a government that is not providing services. It says here:

"I'm writing this letter to protest the cap that was placed on the above physician.

"Please explain to me what's the difference of paying a doctor in the London or Toronto area versus one in our own backyard. In my opinion, this makes no sense whatsoever."

That's when they redesignated Sarnia-Lambton from "underserved" to "not underserved."

This gentleman states: "I've paid into OHIP"—we're talking again about accountability and how money is spent—"since its inception. In my younger years I never used OHIP and now, in my twilight years, when I need this benefit as a resident of Ontario, this system is falling into such a state of disrepair. What can we as seniors expect in the future for health care when we need it?"

He goes on to say that as a veteran of the Second World War and an individual who has stood for peace and prosperity for every Canadian citizen, "I am deeply concerned of the sad state of affairs that we as citizens are facing as time rolls on towards the new millennium."

This is the reality about how government is spending or not spending money in this province.

Where is taxpayer protection? This is reported in the auditor's report: A hospital reported that due to a shortage of operating funds, a new facility that cost \$110 million cannot use four out of eight operating rooms. Taxpayer protection is as much about how money is spent as whether taxes are raised. A balanced budget, in my estimation, should not need legislation; it should have been something that the government intended to do and should have done already.

What was also pointed out in the report was that this government is not spending taxpayers' dollars more efficiently than their predecessors. Of particular interest to me is that accountability for spending of public funds is not in place. We must ask ourselves, when we talk about accountability and we talk about taxpayer protection: "Do we have an improved health care system or a better education system, or better environment standards than five years ago? After all these cuts, has the province achieved a better fiscal report card?"

Under the Conservative watch, the debt of this province has increased from \$88 billion to \$108 billion, with another \$4 billion to be added this year. Our debt-to-GDP ratio has increased from 28.8% before Harris to 31.9% today, and that is an evaluation of fiscal health. This has kept our credit rating to AA-, as was the case during the NDP years. What makes these facts remarkable is that we have been experiencing an unprecedented economic boom for the past four and a half years. All I hear in response to these facts is that there was a mess from before and that the Conservatives have to clean it up. What I'd like to know is, when does this government begin to take responsibility, after almost five years of being in the driver's seat?

I agree with balanced budgets. Again, I don't understand why we need legislation for this government to set a goal to balance the budget. On the other hand, I still believe that the Harris government has put the cart before the horse by giving tax cuts before they got their fiscal house in order. I believe that government must be held accountable, but in action, not just in rhetoric. It is a fact that government agencies such as the environment, health, education, culture, heritage and so many other sectors have become ineffective because they cannot provide the services that this province needs.

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What good is a tax cut if we lose what I consider sustainable people development? What good is it to hear in the Financial Times that the economy is booming if the disabled and students and patients and other infrastructure do not reap the benefit of this economic boom? The question is, of course, who is the economic boom for? It certainly isn't for the people of this province.

I also don't understand how every sector has to continue to do more with less but the Premier's office has doubled, why cabinet has increased in size and their staff wages have risen. The Ontario Conservative government has a double standard. If you are a well-placed Tory, providing direct political assistance to help the government get elected, you'll be rewarded. But if you're a corrections officer or an environmental officer or a nurse or a teacher or a doctor or somebody who's providing direct services to the public, you will not be rewarded; you'll be insulted. By comparison, in August the government quietly approved raises of up to 30% for the 326 political aides who work as communications assistants, chiefs of staff and policy advisers to the province's 25 cabinet ministers, yet it was just announced that there are going to be more cuts in every other sector. Again, we have a double standard. Sustained economic development means we need to balance fiscal responsibility with a social conscience.

Yes, it's the trend around this country and this continent, but if all those hikes in user fees, licence fees and services that you must pay for—I wonder whether the tax cuts come into play as we raise our taxes. I call it a subversive tax hike.

In this House we're all members who have voted to protect the interests of the people who elected us and I'm wary about the words said by this government and the actions taken. I have to say that fiscal responsibility is not just the appearance of fiscal responsibility; it is what I believe in and that's what we on this side of the House believe in. There are many examples of how the actions do not follow the words of fiscal responsibility on the other side of the House. Yes, let's get our fiscal house in order, but let's maintain a social conscience as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'd like to speak in favour of this bill this afternoon for a few moments. Then the parliamentary assistant for the government, the member for Wentworth-Burlington, will conclude on behalf of the government.

This bill has come after much thought. We on the government side during the—

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: Yes, it has been a number of years that this has been promised and we were stymied in the last House and we've brought it forward. We are going to pass it, as we promised that we would. This is legislation that the people of Ontario have asked for. Members of the opposition may or may not agree with that; in fact, listening to some of the Liberal speakers, I don't know where the Liberals stand. When you watch what happened during the Liberal reign, specifically during Mr Peterson's reign, that is, those are considered good times, very good times.

If that was the case, why did we spend? Why did we increase the taxes by, I don't know what it was, 32, 33 times? I don't know why we did that, particularly when the opposition talks about times that go up and down. The taxes were raised, in our opinion unnecessarily, during that time 32 times or 33 times.

The NDP came along, of course, and then there was a big dispute between Mr Laughren and Mr Nixon as to whether or not there was a deficit.

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: I'm not going to get into that. The problem was that there was a deficit during the good times.

So the NDP came into what appeared to be a recession. Yes, it was a difficult time. They decided to spend their way out of the recession. Some of us can still remember sitting in this place, watching as Mr Rae and Mr Laughren stood up to read their first budget. Holy smokes. Couldn't believe what they were going to do to this province and what they did do to this province. At the end of the time in 1995, taxes had increased a total of 65 times. The debt had increased, I think, to 80-some-odd billion dollars. The deficit had increased up to \$11.3 billion. That is why our government had to take a number of the stances that it did to change that. We couldn't continue to bankrupt the province as had been going on by the NDP and the Liberal governments. So we changed that.

We are now at a time when we have undertaken to—and we are going to—eliminate the deficit in the year 2000-01, as we promised. Every last one of our commitments has been honoured. That was one of our commitments. We have also undertaken to say that never again will a government during the good times of the Liberals or the bad times of the NDP be allowed to implement those taxes without going back to the people.

You read some of the taxes that came in during those times. The Ontario personal income tax surtax levied 3% on Ontario tax in excess of \$5,000. In 1998 the gasoline tax increased by one cent per litre. Now we're talking about fuel and wondering why our gasoline taxes are so high. It's because of the taxes of these two governments. In 1989 gasoline tax increased by two cents per litre. The fuel tax was increased by two cents per litre. Then, of course, there was the tire tax. Do you remember the tire tax?

Interjections.

Mr Tilson: Mr Speaker, I need protection here.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Tilson: The commercial concentration levy was imposed. It goes on and on, very serious taxes that affected the economy of this province.

We on this side have spoken about how our economy has improved since we have changed the process. We've cut taxes 99 times since we came into office in 1995 to increase jobs and investment. We're on the track to, as I say, a balanced budget for the year 2000-01.

In its June Ontario forecast—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. This place works much better when only one member speaks at a time.

Mr Tilson: I'm glad you said that, Mr Speaker. I thought at one minute I was going to be rushed. However, we're here.

I started to say a forecast was made by the Toronto-Dominion Bank in June: "The Ontario economy is expected to grow by almost 5% in 1999, its best showing in a decade, and it accounts for two thirds of the new jobs created in Canada this year." The opposition is going to say that's because of the US economy. It hasn't been. It's been because of the policies of this government. We are going to continue to put forward the good economic policies. We don't want another mess created by these two governments—the Liberal and the NDP governments—and that's why we're asking that Bill 7 be approved.

Those are my comments.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): It's my pleasure to finish the debate on behalf of the government caucus on this bill. Why are we here? You'll recall that in 1995 a taxpayers' pledge was signed. The Premier, who was then leader of the third party, Mike Harris, signed the taxpayers' pledge, basically indicating that one day this legislation would come to pass, and here we are.

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Basically what this is is a promise made, a promise kept; a commitment made by the Premier of the province

many years ago. It was one of a number of commitments made, such as a 30% tax cut. I remember that when I campaigned on that pledge people didn't believe it. Back then, in 1995, when a politician promised something, it really didn't mean anything because they just didn't keep their word. But our government has changed that. It has brought integrity back to government. When we say we're going to do something, we do it.

So the Premier, who wasn't the Premier then but was about to be, signed the taxpayers' pledge and he signed it because he believed in it. Not only did he sign it, but 129 of the 130 candidates for our party signed it, and to this day I'm wondering who that person was who didn't sign it. The reason I signed it and virtually all the members here signed it was because we believed in it.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Who didn't sign it? Was it Chris Stockwell?

Mr Skarica: The member from Hamilton East said it was Chris Stockwell who didn't sign it. I expected him to say that, so I asked the Minister of Labour before I took the podium: "Are you that person of the 130? You were the rebel of the day. You're the obvious candidate at that time. Were you the person who didn't sign that?" Perhaps he didn't sign it. The fact of the matter is that the Minister of Labour did sign the taxpayers' pledge.

It didn't get him into cabinet, so why did he sign it? It's obvious why you signed it. It's because you believed in it. That's why we all signed it. We believed in what we were running on. We ran on the Common Sense Revolution. We ran on pledges like this and we intended to keep our word. That's why we were re-elected, not because we raised taxes, not because the economy is thriving, which it is; we were re-elected because we brought back integrity to government. When we said we were going to do something, we did it. We do what we say and we say what we do. That was a refreshing change and it was the first time people had seen that in Ontario in many, many years.

Now the Liberals say, "We're supporting this as well." I have to say that when I listened to the members over on the Liberal backbench, when I heard what they had to say, I wasn't sure. Are they still on board? Are they going to support this legislation or not? In my opinion the reason the Liberals are now supporting this legislation is because the public wants this legislation. We've been elected twice on this platform and on bringing integrity and accountability back into government. The Liberals are slow at times, but they've finally figured out, "Well, the public wants this."

Even as recently as the spring of this year, before the election, that wasn't their position.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Have they changed a lot?

Mr Skarica: Mr McGuinty, the leader of the party—I thank the Minister of Labour for asking me the appropriate question. I didn't ask him to do so ahead of time. On April 18 the London Free Press reported, "Ontario Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty says he's not crazy about planned government legislation that would encourage more use of referendums in the province." On the

same day the Toronto Star quoted Mr McGuinty as well. What did he say to the people of Toronto? "We'll take a look at the legislation, but in principle I don't like referendum legislation. I believe I know what the people of Ontario are looking for. They're looking for a government that listens."

Basically Mr McGuinty took the position we'd heard for the last 20 or 30 years: "Government knows best. Yes, we'll listen, but in the end we don't need people having a say. They should mind their own business. We're politicians, we know what we're doing." Basically it was, "Trust us."

Anyway, after the election the Toronto Sun reported on October 27, on the eve of this legislation being brought in, that Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty said that his party will support the balanced budget, just as it has in the last two elections. This is revisionism in the most extreme. I don't recall the Liberals supporting this legislation in 1995. I did some research on the matter. You remember that 129 of 130 Conservatives, including the rebel of the day, Mr Stockwell, signed the taxpayers' pledge. How many Liberals signed the taxpayers' pledge?

Mr Agostino: Why are you spending all your time whining about the fact that we're supporting your legislation?

Mr Skarica: The Hamilton East member is talking and I ask him the simple question: How many of your members signed the taxpayers' pledge in 1995? Did you? I don't think you did. Four out of 130 signed the taxpayers' pledge, and they probably got into trouble. Why? Because their leader, Lyn McLeod, didn't sign the taxpayers' pledge. Mr McGuinty didn't sign the taxpayers' pledge—four out of 130. So why are they now taking the position that, "Not only do we support it now, but we always have," which is completely untrue and a flip-flop? Again, it shows you politicians saying one thing and doing another. This is just another example of it.

This is why the Liberals are over there and we are over here. When we said we were going to do something, when we gave our word, we kept it. So why have the Liberals flip-flopped on this issue? The answer is simple: You want to win the next election, and now that you know the public supports this, you figure you're going to join the party as Johnny-come-latelys.

I'm going to refer to newspaper articles, not from my riding, not from ridings the Conservatives hold, but from ridings the Liberals hold. This is what you're hearing from people in your own constituencies, in ridings you hold right now.

The Windsor Star—I think Windsor has three Liberal seats right now—reported that Doug Robson, of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, said: "You want this to be in place when that happens"—he's talking about recessions—"so people can't increase spending." The Ontario Chamber of Commerce supports this legislation. You've heard them, and that has caused you concern. In fact, they're saying this in areas where you currently have seats.

Let's go to the Welland Tribune—Welland is one of the very last strongholds of the NDP. What are they saying? Walter Robinson from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation was quoted: "'In the US and Canada the measures have proven so popular it would be political folly to get rid of them,' said Walter Robinson. 'A political party risks great heat in terms of tinkering with it or making a mockery of the law.'"

A report in the St Catharines Standard—the member from St Catharines is usually here, but since his demotion he's not here. The Taxpayers Coalition Niagara indicate that they like this legislation as well and that the "proposals in the throne speech are similar to those once advocated" by their group. On and on it goes.

Northern Ontario, the Sudbury Star—

Mr Agostino: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member made reference to a member's attendance in the House. I think we know that is inappropriate, and I ask him to withdraw that.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order.

Mr Skarica: To be fair, the member from St Catharines is here as often as anyone else. I didn't mean to say anything negative about him.

Continuing, northern Ontario, Sudbury, the same thing: The Sudbury Star praises this legislation, indicating that "financial penalties for cabinet ministers is a good thing and would serve as a deterrent against such actions." I'm sure that will cause the Minister of Labour some concern.

Toronto Star: Judith Andrew, from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, indicated that the legislation is good. This is in the Toronto Star: "Your provincial government understands that small business's ability to create jobs is hampered by excessive taxes and wasteful deficit spending."

In northern Ontario, the Kenora Daily Miner and News supports this legislation.

Basically, if you look at Ontario newspapers, the Ontario-wide response to this from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—

Interjection: It's a juggernaut.

Mr Skarica: That's right, it is a juggernaut—the Taxpayers Federation, the number of newspapers that normally are Liberal-leaning and, if I dare say, somewhat left-leaning, all support this legislation.

The Kenora Daily Miner, from northern Ontario, has this to say about Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty: "McGuinty is backing this legislation now because of political expediency," backing up my argument completely. "He sees it as a vote-getter." They'd be right again. The Liberals didn't endorse similar legislation in 1995 and skirted the issue in the spring campaign. Obviously, either they didn't review the Liberal revisionism of history or they just don't believe it.

If I could deal briefly with some of the criticisms of the Legislation, one criticism is that it doesn't cover all the provincial taxes. There's a bunch that are included. What are they? Tobacco tax, land transfer tax, racetracks

tax, estate administration tax, mining taxes, preferred share dividends tax and gross receipts tax. When you hear that list, it sounds pretty impressive. You think maybe it's not as good as the government is saying it is. That's quite a few taxes. But if you pull out the budget and look at page 53, the bottom six or seven taxes aren't covered, but there's no revenue from there. It's the top six or seven that are included in the legislation, and they cover 97% of the taxes raised in Ontario. So basically, 97% of what could be taxed is covered by this legislation. I think that's pretty comprehensive legislation in the end.

1650

The NDP doesn't support this legislation, and the Liberals, I suggest, are lukewarm on it. Another criticism I have heard is that you get boxed in if you have referendums, you don't have flexibility. As I indicated last time, if you want to lose flexibility you should run deficits, get huge debts and pay a lot of interest. Eventually your interest payments will become one of the biggest expenses you have. That's where we are right now, paying almost \$10 billion in interest. That's the third-highest expense, behind education and health care, which are the two big-ticket items. We spend more on public debt interest than virtually on any other ministry.

Another criticism is that it boxes people in and limits the power of the Legislature. Yes, it does. They can't go out and spend as freely as they used to, because they can't raise taxes as easily. One of the other important components of this legislation is that it forces integrity on to the political process. When I ran in 1995, we had just had a Liberal federal government take over. If you remember, they were going to get rid of the GST. That was a popular thing, and they said they were going to do it. What happened? Once they got into power, they forgot about what they said. Their word didn't mean anything. Yes, they said they were going to do it. Then they got into power, and all of a sudden they didn't do it. They probably helped us get elected, as a matter of fact, because it was just another example of the politics of the day, the cynicism, that you can say whatever you want, but in the end you're not going to do it.

Then we came along in 1995. We had a plan and we had commitments. When we got elected, no matter how difficult it was, no matter how many protestors we had, no matter how many phone calls we got, when we passed legislation, we looked back at our campaign platform, the Common Sense Revolution, and said, "This is our commitment, this is our word, this is what we're going to do," and then we did it. We brought integrity back into the political process. The federal Liberals probably helped us out by campaigning on the GST and then immediately retreating on it. To this day, six or seven years later, they haven't kept their word. They haven't gotten rid of the GST. They're not going to get rid of the GST. In fact, if there's anywhere where there should be referendum legislation, it should be with the federal government. Now they have a surplus and they're talking about spending it instead of reducing taxes, as the vast majority of the population wants.

How has this legislation worked elsewhere? I think it's too early to talk about Manitoba and some of the other provinces in Canada, because they've just passed it, so let's go to Switzerland. Switzerland has had it for a long time. Over the years, over the decades, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, it really didn't matter who was in power. It didn't matter if it was Conservatives, Liberals or the NDP. What was happening at all levels of government—municipal, provincial, federal—was that we were getting massive spending programs, massive deficits, massive debt. Yet the core problems were still there. The number of people on welfare doubled between 1985 and 1995, when we took over, despite all kinds of increases in spending there.

What happened in Switzerland during that time was that they ran very small deficits. They had virtually no debt. As a result, the Swiss franc became one of the strongest currencies the planet has ever known. Why did they run small deficits? Their spending on government as a percentage of GDP is now 30% now. That's virtually almost half of what we're spending in Canada, and why is that? Because in Switzerland they've had this legislation for a long time.

If you want to raise taxes in Switzerland, yeah, you can do it, but you've got to go to the public with a referendum. It's a difficult thing to do and it takes time, plus you have to get the people's OK. They give it sometimes, but a lot of times they don't. So before you go into a government spending spree in Switzerland, you've got to think about: "OK, I've got to raise taxes to get it. Am I going to be able to do it?" Just that very thought, the threat of "I have to go to a referendum," causes them to back off. The result has been that in Switzerland, with this legislation over the last 20 or 30 years, they don't have deficits, they don't have debt, they have one of the strongest economies in the world and that's where we're headed.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm pleased to enter into this debate. I'm intrigued by the title of this legislation. It assures me that the current government does in fact have a sense of humour. I recall many years ago when the government of Brian Mulroney introduced an act called the Seal Protection Act which in fact made it illegal to protect seals, and I thought there was some irony in that.

Since then we've seen this government follow the lead, and we've had the Tenant Protection Act which says that tenants don't really have protection; we've had the Ontarians with Disabilities Act which says that people with disabilities don't need any assistance. So this is fairly consistent.

It does also concern me that a government should not need to pass legislation to protect the people. It is the automatic role of the government to protect the people. I'm also intrigued by the legislation because it comes from a government that, before the last election, spent over \$100 million on ads that have now been ruled as clearly partisan. It's no wonder that the public is very cynical about politicians.

I find it a little difficult having this government introduce this legislation to protect taxpayers' money. I think back to the auditor last week, a neutral outside body that very clearly said that the government has not protected the taxpayer's money over the past year. We have comments that we have seen highway maintenance costs increase, rather than decrease, with privatization. We have seen, over the last four years, the average family debt in this province, the share of provincial debt, increase by \$8,000 per family. I would be intrigued if the public could have a referendum on the debt. We're talking about a referendum on taxes; let's talk about a referendum on the debt and how they want to deal with that.

During constituency week I was in Picton for a day and I met with constituents who were concerned that they in fact are not being protected by this government. They're concerned that the government is not protecting their health care. During the election, not having the money to put ads on TV such as the current government does, the Liberals went door to door and talked to people. It may appear that the motive is to get elected or re-elected, but the reality is it is a wonderful opportunity to talk to the individual citizens of this province and learn their concerns.

I talked to a gentleman who had made three overnight trips to Kingston for a heart operation. He went to Kingston, spent the night and in the morning he got sent home because there wasn't enough staffing for the hospital beds. He did that three times in a row and the fourth time, fortunately, got the operation. He commented to me that what he found particularly difficult was that each night, as he waited in hospital for that operation the next day that didn't happen, he watched the ads on television telling him what a wonderful health care system we have in Ontario. He said to me, "You know, it's a shame they couldn't have got one less ad and hired a nurse in Kingston so I could have had my operation." He and many others in my riding don't believe that they're being protected in their health care.

They're concerned that they're not being protected in their education system. We're seeing universities now talk about getting rid of the three-year program and replacing it with a four-year to adjust for the loss of one year in high school. That costs each student about \$15,000 for their tuition and living expenses if they are away from home. Our students need some protection.

When I first came to Toronto after being elected and walked down Yonge Street, I became convinced that the standard greeting in this city is, "Can you spare some loose change?" My constituents and people here believe that people in need of mental health services need protection.

People believe that they need protection from the anonymity of government. We have with all of the ministries a 1-800 no-answer line that they cannot get responses from when they call. They need to have access to their government. In fact, they're being protected away from having access to the government.

1700

They want to know, if the agenda is to protect the taxpayer, why the ministers' assistants' salaries were increased by 30%. I can't find anyone in my constituency who has had increases of 30%. How does doubling the size of the Premier's office protect the taxpayer?

If this government was serious about protecting the taxpayers, they would immediately bring about some changes in the Family Responsibility Office. The auditor's report was damning: 59% of the families that are cases with the Family Responsibility Office are being well served. We wouldn't accept 59% as a passing grade in anything else we do in life, and yet that seemed acceptable.

This government got elected in 1995 with a promise to create a revolution. They've done that, absolutely, without question. They also promised to introduce this legislation during their first term, and that brings me back to the sense of cynicism that exists among the public. The promise wasn't kept.

I can recall, as a youth in high school, reading the novel 1984. I now feel that, in this House, I'm living 1984. What is being said and what is reality don't mesh.

Instead of having a revolution that protected the taxpayer, and I refer back to the \$8,000 increase in debt per family, it simply produced a relentless assault on everyone who dared to question it or disagree with it.

The tax cuts on income tax have certainly been touted as wonderful, but you have to have income before you benefit from that tax cut. Statistics Canada says that the average single parent family in Ontario, headed by a female, has an income of \$14,000. Try to imagine living as a single person on \$14,000, let alone with children. It's impossible. What have the income tax cuts done for that individual? Absolutely nothing.

Would a sales tax cut have helped in some way? Certainly. But the cuts have been made and the tax advantages have been generated to favour wealthy taxpayers and big business. That's not to say that big business is inherently wrong, but we seem to be worshipping at the altar of big business, and we hear that big business does everything better than anyone else can do it. I think of big business when I think of Eaton's, Consumers Distributing, K mart, Canadian Airlines, and I think we need to have some respect for small business. With all of the touting of the savings that are being created by amalgamation, that we're hearing about, we need to recognize that amalgamation is in fact cutting small business out of the loop.

As we have the large amalgamated school boards and municipalities, the money is becoming of such substance on some contracts that our small business people can no longer compete. Our business people in the small towns that used to be near a municipal office or school board office have lost out on it.

We need to think about this province as being run as a family would be run. Perhaps that sounds corny, but I would suggest the same principles would apply to the operation of the province as to a family. I think of the

approach of my wife, Linda, and I to our family: We make commitments to our children and we make promises and they are kept. They are kept even when it hurts. But a promise is a promise. When this government talks about keeping a promise, the promise was not kept over the last four years.

We also believe that we need, as a family, to tell each other what is happening, what we are considering. We don't put trial balloons out, we don't leak things to the media to see how the public reacts; we tell each other what we're going to do and make a decision from that basis.

We don't speak down to our children. We recognize that not all knowledge rests in the adults in a family. I believe the people in Ontario have been spoken down to over the last four years. At times when input is being requested, the decisions have already been made, and that demeans the whole political process.

We need to recognize the strength of the collective decisions within the family; we need to do that within the province. We need to recognize that not all the expertise in Ontario resides in this room or on one side of this room.

We certainly, as a family, wouldn't spend our entire fortune on a new and unproven item, yet we see this government trying not a pilot project or a test project but, "Let's change every school in the province," and, "Let's change every community college," and, "Let's change every municipality."

Certainly, I have to support the concept of protecting the taxpayer, but I also have to look back at the last four years with some skepticism that this government can in fact do that.

Mr Agostino: I am pleased to join the debate as we're into third reading of this piece of legislation. I was listening with interest: The member for Oak Ridges, in his opening comments on behalf of the government, stated that this piece of legislation was long overdue. You've been in power for almost five years. It has taken you five years to bring in this piece of legislation, that you so fundamentally believe in and that in principle was so important to you. When you look at the hundreds of bills you've brought in, in the five years you've been in government, this was not one of them. So I question the commitment of this government. When you look at the track record, frankly, in the almost five year you've been in power, it is not a very good track record when it comes to dealing with the budget in this province.

We remind you that the last government in Ontario to balance the budget was the Liberal government in 1989-90, and the last time a Conservative government balanced the budget was in 1969-70. So the last balanced budget in Ontario was under a Liberal government in 1989-90. It has taken a Conservative government almost five years to bring in balanced budget legislation. To Liberals, this is not a new concept. We ran in 1995 with a commitment to balance the budget within four years, two years earlier than the Tories' commitment to it. In 1995 we ran on that commitment.

This government continues to talk about how wonderful they are in managing the finances of this province. Let me remind you that every single province, with the exception of British Columbia, has balanced its budget already—every single province. Your achievements when it comes to balancing budgets are on par with the great achievements of former Premier Glen Clark's government in British Columbia. If you want to match yourself on that level and consider yourself as the standard-bearers for that, go right ahead and do it. But clearly Ontario is now one of only two provinces in Canada that do not have a balanced budget.

This balanced budget legislation that is in front of us is not rocket science, folks; it's not some revolutionary idea. Frankly, we're behind there as well. Every single province, with the exceptions of Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and British Columbia, has this type of legislation. This is nothing earth-shattering here. This is not some sort of great forward idea by the Harris government. Frankly, you're behind seven other provinces there as well. You continue to lag behind most other provinces (a) when it comes to balancing your budget as a province and (b) when it comes to bringing in balanced budget legislation.

The reality is the question of priorities for this government. When we look at its record, we see a government that has brought the debt of the province up \$21 billion, from \$88 billion when it took office. The previous NDP government took it from \$45 billion to \$88 billion. You took it from \$88 billion to \$109 billion. That is \$21 billion added to the provincial debt in four years, and estimations are it will go up another \$4 billion this year. That will be a total of \$25 billion added to the provincial debt by your government. You do all of this at the same time that you offer a tax cut.

1710

You talk about priorities—if you look at the evaluation of the credit rating agencies in Ontario, under a Liberal government it was AAA. Then under the NDP government it went from AA+ to AA, and then AA-. The Premier across the floor was jumping up and down and screaming daily about this rating when he was in opposition. Let me remind this House and the government that that rating has not changed since you've been in power, in great economic times, great growth across this province, across this country and across this continent, and the reason it has not changed is because you failed to deal with the debt, because your priority has continued to be a tax cut to your wealthy friends.

When you talk about how to best approach the issue of balanced budgets and what are the priorities, I would suggest to this government that clearly if your priority was to truly balance your budget earlier, to truly get the house in order earlier, you would have then forsaken the tax cut that you gave and applied that money to the budget of the province; and you would have, in a much shorter period of time, balanced the budget. You certainly would have been much further ahead rather than

simply being one of the last two provinces left in this country without balancing its budget.

If you look at the government's track record—and my colleague from Wentworth-Burlington spoke about commitments that they've kept and the fact that this is another government commitment they've kept—this is a government that runs on myth. It's a myth that they have built up through their own advertising, through using hundreds of millions of dollars, leading up to an election, on propaganda, on blatant partisan political advertising with taxpayers' dollars, but the reality is a little different than that.

They talk about keeping promises. I remember the Premier clearly promising not to close any hospitals across the province. We certainly have seen what has happened to that promise: not kept, a betrayal of the people of Ontario. Remember the Premier speaking three days before the election, saying that they identified the cuts without cutting one cent out of the environment? That was three days before the election in 1995. The reality is that they've cut well over \$100 million; I think it's in the range of about \$120 million out of the Ministry of the Environment's budget in this province. The reality is that they have gotten rid of almost half the staff who used to work in the Ministry of the Environment. The reality is that today we're no longer able to enforce environmental standards across Ontario. Today we've become the laughingstock of North American when it comes to environmental protection. Today in this province we are the second-worst polluter in North America, next to Texas. That is the reality of the impact of your cuts on real Ontarians in their health care and the protection of their environment.

We also look at mixed-up priorities. What was this government's priority when they took office in 1995? They decided, first of all, they were going to beat up welfare recipients. They were going to cut 22% out of welfare recipients, and you ended up cutting 22% of the benefits that 500,000 children at that time were relying on for support. When you took office, half a million children in this province were relying on that for support, and you cut their parents, often single parents, often people who were struggling. You took away to a great degree their ability to continue to feed those kids, to get a coat for the winter, to house them properly, to get shoes for those kids—basic necessities of life. But this government felt it was a priority to beat up welfare recipients with that.

Then you brought in this crazy thing called workfare that supposedly was going to change everything, that was going to bring all these people back to work. The reality of what you did there was spend a ton of money to simply rename and rejig a few programs, but the reality was that most of the programs that were in place were effective, were training people, were working with people. But you had to market this a little differently. You had to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to go out there and undo everything and set up your workfare scheme, which we now see has been a total failure, with a

small percentage of recipients involved in the so-called workfare programs.

Clearly, when you look at a government that claims to be the great fiscal manager, great at dealing with the finances and the economics of this province, let me suggest to you that the reality is much different than the fiction and the myths that the government members and their advertising continue to tell us.

When you look at an example of priorities—I know the federal Liberals have been brought up a number of times today, but they moved much quicker than this province has to balance its budget. They moved very quickly because they've realized the priority was balancing their budget rather than borrowing more money for tax cuts. The Tories believed that it was important to borrow money to give tax cuts to their wealthy friends, while they were ignoring the accumulated debt in this province. Why did it take them six years to balance the budget? Why are we the second-last province of this country to balance the budget? The great fiscal manager is knocked out of the House because they believed the tax cuts were the priority. We believe that there is a time and place for tax cuts, but there has to be an order to do that in. This party and my leader, Dalton McGuinty, believe very clearly that the time for tax cuts is only after you've ensured you have adequate funding for a proper health care system, which this government has abandoned completely.

Now we see Premier Harris is starting to show his true colours when he aligns himself with Premier Ralph Klein, talking about a two-tier health care system. He has destroyed the health care system of this province to the point where he now believes that he needs to bring in a two-tier health care. He did not distance himself from the comments made by Premier Klein with regard to private hospitals and private health care in the province of Alberta. This is the reality.

Whatever this government does is bent on what the American pollsters tell them, every single action. When you look at it, they've destroyed a great deal of the stability in the health care system with their blind cuts, with their closing of hospitals, with their destruction commission. You now have seen that the auditor has told you what we in the opposition have told you for the last five years: that the real cost will be double what you've estimated with this restructuring. You blew that one big time. They've destroyed the basic fundamentals of public education in this province with their massive cuts, and we see there's more to come.

Those are Liberal priorities, education and health care, not the priorities of this government, and then you balance the budget. Only after that do you look at the issue of tax cuts, but those priorities must come first. You don't seem to understand that. You seem to think it's OK to continue giving tax cuts while health care goes under, while education goes under and while the debt in this province continues to grow.

This government has come Johnny-come-lately to balance budgets in this province, in this country. As I

said, BC is one of the other two provinces that have not accomplished that. What this legislation today does is, it brings Ontario into line with most other provinces. We'll support this legislation because we said in 1995 we'd bring in a balanced budget within four years. We believe in that. The government has a responsibility to look after tax dollars and do it properly. I certainly hope the government will learn some lessons from the horrible mistakes they've made in the last four years and not repeat those mistakes in the next four years.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I enjoy the opportunity to take part in this debate because once again we're seeing all sorts of twisting by the Conservative Party and even more twisting and turning by the Liberal Party. The Liberals want to have it both ways: They want to try to say that they oppose what the government is doing here, but when it comes down to a vote, they're going to vote for it. I want to explore why both of them are wrong. I want to be very pointed about what's really going on here.

What the government has done over the last four and half years is this: They have reduced taxes for the most well-off people. The income tax is a progressive tax, so the more income you have, the more taxes you pay, and this government has gone after the income tax and cut it. The highest-income people in Ontario are enjoying a tax reduction.

But on the other side of the equation, this government has gone out, and every tax, every fee that affects lower-, modest- and middle-income families, they've raised with a vengeance.

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If you are a family and you have a son or daughter in university, this government has increased the tuition fees by \$1,500 a year, enough to wipe out any so-called reduction in income taxes for the majority of families. If you have a son or daughter in college, they've increased the tuition fees by \$900 a year. Those are tax increases.

For senior citizens, they've gone after prescription medicine. They've placed prescription medicine copayment taxes on any prescription. It means that senior citizens, in many cases, are paying \$400 or \$500 a year in prescription medicine copayment taxes. Most senior citizens didn't get an income tax reduction because they have modest incomes, but they're sure being hit with the increases in prescription medicine copayment fees.

Then there is the motor vehicle registration fee. It used to be that people in northern Ontario did not have to pay a motor vehicle registration fee, to offset the chronically higher gas prices. Under this government, oh, no, get that motor vehicle registration fee up there. So for most families, another \$100 tax.

Then there are fishing licence fees. This is the government that has almost doubled fishing licence fees; again, a tax which hits the average person who maybe can't afford to have a condo in the Caribbean or to holiday in Hawaii so they like to go fishing in the summer. This government is going after them.

They have almost doubled hunting licence fees.

Remote cottage lots: Some people who, again, can't afford the condo in Florida or the luxurious vacation will have something called a remote cabin. There used to be a tax on that of about \$130 a year. This government has increased it by 400% and 500%. Ordinary people who go to these remote cabins, which have no road, no sewer, no water, no electricity, no services whatsoever, got an announcement in the last two months that this government is going to increase their annual tax from \$130 to, in some cases, \$550.

That's what this government has done. They have reduced taxes for the highest-income people in the province and then, in every single case, they have increased the taxes on ordinary people.

The announcement of the minister responsible for Management Board last week said that the government is going to reduce investments in child care and in college and university students by another \$300 million a year. What he didn't say is that the government is going to increase a whole bunch of fees, a whole bunch of taxes, that hit at lower- and modest-income families again. A vulnerable child or a vulnerable adult who is dealing with the public trustee is being hit with a whole new list of fees—taxes—on vulnerable people, people who have low incomes.

People who have to deal with the Family Responsibility Office, although there is absolute irresponsibility in that office, are being hit with a whole new list of fees. People who want to appeal their property taxes in this province are hit again by a whole new set of fees by this government.

Who do these fees strike at? They strike at lower-income, modest-income and middle-income families. The history of this government is, if you've got a high income, this government has had a tax break for you. If you're a middle-income family, a modest-income family, a low-income family, this government has gone after you with a vengeance. They've increased every fee and every tax that impacts on you, every one they could find.

Now, with this bill, this government wants to cement in place this unfair and unbalanced situation: Tax cuts for the well-off and a long list of tax increases for middle-, modest- and lower-income families. That's what they want to try to cement in place with this bill.

And you know what? The Liberals are going to support them. The Liberal leader and the Liberal caucus are going to stand up and vote for this unfair, unbalanced and unprincipled approach to income distribution and taxation in the province.

It goes beyond this, because in order to finance their tax cut for the well-off, this government went out there and attacked health care. They went out there and attacked education. They went out there and attacked environmental protection, they went out there and attacked not-for-profit and affordable housing, they went out there and downloaded in a most unfair way on to municipalities. That's what they've done.

Just to give you an example of some of the things that are going on, of how unbalanced this has become, it used

to be that Ontario had one of the better post-secondary education systems in the country. We used to have a good college and university system. Today in Canada, Ontario invests less in its colleges and universities on a per-person basis than any other province in the country. Even poor provinces like Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan invest more in their colleges and universities on a per-capita basis than Ontario does. Ontario ranks dead last. In the time of a knowledge economy, at a time when investment in education is more important for our economic and social future than ever, the Harris government is headed in the opposite direction: deinvest in education.

It is even more dramatic than that. If you actually compare Ontario with jurisdictions in the United States, Ontario would be next to the bottom there. The only states that would rank below Ontario would be Vermont and New Hampshire, both of which have a lot of private universities and private colleges and therefore they've never fully developed their public post-secondary institutions.

We in Ontario, if you look at it in a North American context, invest so little now in post-secondary education—colleges and universities—that we rank below American states that have chronic literacy problems: Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana. Even Arkansas invests more in post-secondary education, in the future of its workforce, than Ontario does now. That is the imbalance this government has created. That is the education deficit this government has created. Now they want to put that education deficit in stone. They want to make it impossible for governments in the future to address that education imbalance. You know what? The Liberals agree with them. They're prepared to vote for this sham.

We have in this province now a health deficit, an education deficit, an environmental deficit, an infrastructure deficit and a social deficit measured by the terrible shortage of affordable housing that we see happening. This government wants to enshrine in stone those education deficits, health deficits, environmental deficits, infrastructure deficits and social deficits, and the Liberals are going to vote for it. The Liberals are going to support a totally unbalanced situation, that says the government's going to fudge the books to give the appearance of a financial balance and ignore all of these meaningful deficits that impact on the lives of real people. The Liberals are going to vote for that.

We are not going to vote for this sham. We recognize that the issue that touches real people, that has meaning for real families out there, is to have a good health care system, to make the health care investments.

If we're going to prosper in the future and do well in the knowledge economy, we have to address the education deficit.

Ontario has the second-worst environmental record now in North America. If we don't address the environmental deficit, that is going to come back to bite us in a dozen different ways.

If we don't address the issue of homelessness and the fact that there is less and less affordable housing, the costs in terms of social dislocation, the increased costs in the health care system, the costs for families and people are going to grow. We believe we must address those real deficits and not play this financial sham game.

I say it is a financial sham game because there is lots of evidence on the record of how shallow, how hollow, how superficial this legislation is. This legislation is actually based on the Manitoba legislation. A Conservative government was in power in Manitoba for 10½ years. They brought in so-called balanced budget legislation. If you read the clause-by-clause of this legislation, it is almost an exact duplicate of Manitoba's.

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Well, the Conservatives were just voted out of government in Manitoba. One of the things the incoming government did is they brought in an accounting firm to look at what the true state of the books was. A private sector accounting firm came in and looked at the state of the finances in the province of Manitoba after the Conservatives were the government, and what do you think they found? There was no balanced budget; there was a deficit in excess of \$300 million. That is with the very legislation that this government says is supposed to protect taxpayers. It didn't do a thing in Manitoba. What it meant was that the Conservative government went around and hid something over there and hid something over there and hid something else over here—the same thing this government is going to do.

The Liberals in Nova Scotia passed this kind of legislation. They passed legislation that is very similar to this legislation. The Liberals have just been voted out as government in Nova Scotia. What did they find now that the Liberals are gone? The Liberals in Nova Scotia, despite passing so-called balanced budget legislation, used several types of financing called off-book financing which in fact leave Nova Scotia with a \$400-million deficit.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: Some of the Conservatives are laughing, but I don't want you to laugh too hard, because what's the first thing the Conservative government did in Nova Scotia now that they are the new government? They brought in legislation exempting themselves from the balanced budget legislation: phony, shallow, hollow, completely superficial. That's why we can't support this nonsense.

Let me tell you what I think this government should be doing. They should be addressing the real deficits out there. They should be addressing the health care deficit, the education deficit, the environmental deficit, the social deficit—those things which impact so dreadfully on the lives of people. This government should be addressing those.

How serious is this? Let me give you a measurement. What we know from some of the economic studies that have been done is that in the past couple of years inequality has grown worse and worse in this province.

We should expect that. When the government is prepared to give a substantial income tax cut to the well-off but then increases all the user fees, tuition fees, copayment fees for lower- and modest- and middle-income families, we would expect some imbalance. That's exactly what is happening.

There's a study called *The Growing Gap*, and it's by the Centre for Social Justice. This is what the study shows: It finds that the proportion of middle-income families with children fell from 60% of the population to 44% of the population. It found that the incomes of the 10% at the top are now 314 times higher than the 10% at the bottom. It found that in 1973 the incomes of the 10% at the top were only 21 times the incomes of the 10% at the bottom, but they are now 314 times. That inequality can't be allowed to grow. But this government is saying that it wants to not only grow that inequality but cement that inequality by putting in place this kind of legislation.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): And the Liberals like that idea.

Mr Hampton: And the Liberals are going to support it.

We saw some other tax breaks with this government. We saw two weeks ago the government come forward and say that they're prepared to subsidize millionaire NHL hockey franchises in Ontario. NHL hockey players' salaries have inflated by 480% in the last nine years, and this government is now going to subsidize that. Once again, the Liberals are in favour of that. The Liberals are saying that they would give a tax break for that. That's the kind of thing this government wants to cement in place.

I want to challenge the government. If you believe that, before governments can change taxes and bring balance to the tax system back into place, referenda are necessary, then call a referendum today on giving NHL millionaires a tax break. Hold a referendum today on that.

But again, to show how phony this legislation is, this legislation would not provide for a referendum on giving millionaire NHL hockey players and franchises a tax break, even though we know that if you're going to give NHL franchises a tax break, someone else in the tax system will either have to pick up the tax increase to off-balance it or the government will have to increase the health deficit, the education deficit, the environmental deficit, the social deficit. This government talks a good line, but here they are, and they're going to fork over millions of dollars to people who already have had a 480% increase in their incomes in the last nine years and there's not going to be any referendum on that, no referendum on that tax change.

Mr Christopherson: How do the Liberals feel about that?

Mr Hampton: The Liberals support that. The Liberals, again, think that's a great idea.

If the government wanted to be serious about this issue, they would look at a couple of things that I think are germane to the debate.

We all know that the economy moves in a cycle. You can have periods where the economy booms, and then you will have periods where the economy doesn't boom, with a recession or, worst of all, a depression. We know that those business cycles generally work over about a five-year period—sometimes a little less, sometimes a little more, but generally over a five-year period you'll have an economic cycle.

We also know that when governments try to sustain health care and education and environmental protection during an economic downturn, governments will very likely run into deficits. But on the other side of the equation, we know that when the economy is booming, governments generally take in more tax revenue than they usually expect.

Is the government talking about balancing the budget over an economic cycle? Are they talking about putting in place some balance between the downturn in the economy and the upturn in the economy? No, not at all. They're not interested in trying to balance that economic or business cycle.

I would say to you, if you had some proposals here to balance the budget over the economic cycle, then I would think you're serious. Then I would think you're sincere. Then I would think you are really interested in the interests of taxpayers and the interests of citizens across the province. But you are bringing in the same phony legislation that was flouted in Manitoba by the Conservative government, was flouted by the Liberals in Nova Scotia and is now being flouted by the Conservatives in Nova Scotia. It was phony in those two instances and it's going to be phony here.

If this were a serious debate about this issue, then I would be prepared to offer the government a long list of suggestions about how we might be prepared to deal with this, but it is evident from the comments I've made and the comments some of my colleagues have made that the government is not serious here. This is another propaganda piece by this government, a government that is prepared to offer up the appearance of financial balance while ignoring the education deficit, the health-care deficit, the environmental deficit, the social deficit and the infrastructure deficit that a government which comes after them is going to have to deal with. That is shameful.

This is a government that has created a most unbalanced tax system, has given a tax cut to the well off but has increased every single tax and user fee that impacts on low- or modest- and middle-income families, and now they want to freeze that in place. All of that is shameful, but what is most shameful of all is that Liberals want to support this. Liberals want to go out there and say that they'd be prepared to do something about these problems, but in fact they're preparing to support this sham by the government, this propaganda piece by the government.

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I want to draw to your attention the comments that some others have made about this sham the government

is putting forward. I want to refer to the Kitchener-Waterloo Record of December 16, 1998, where they say, "Premier Mike Harris can say he means well by introducing his taxpayer protection bill, but he is using what should be an unnecessary tool in a democracy." That's the Kitchener-Waterloo Record.

Then the London Free Press, December 20, 1998, when this was first introduced, "On examination, it is little more than political smoke and mirrors."

Then there's the Toronto Star, December 16, 1998:

"The next government and all subsequent governments should be entitled to the same flexibility that Harris's government has enjoyed. There was no law preventing him from cutting taxes at a time when the provincial deficit was at an all-time high.

"If the man wants a statue, let the party faithful build one. But it's wrong for him to try to enshrine himself forever in our provincial law."

There's Professor Brian Tanguay of Wilfrid Laurier University: "It creates a patchwork system where you have some areas doing just fine and other areas in dire straits. You can see that's what will happen—it will further widen the gap between the haves and have-nots."

Then there's Ted Carmichael, senior economist at J.P. Morgan Securities, quoted in the Globe and Mail, December 30, 1998:

"I think it's wrong for Canada to say now that we can never go back into deficit This is suggesting we should take a reasonable approach to fiscal policy. We've gained ourselves some leeway. We can run a modest fiscal deficit if we believe the economy is coming under some fairly heavy downward pressure." But what this government is doing makes that impossible.

Then there's Steve Murphy, economist for the Institute for Policy Analysis, quoted in the Globe and Mail, December 30, 1998:

"You can't continually run deficits, but the idea is that in bad times you run a deficit, while in good times you run a surplus You think back to the Great Depression, when there was this idea that you cut back on spending when times are bad. If some world event happens and all hell breaks loose and growth slumps off the table, you can now envisage people in power saying, 'We have to cut spending, because we don't want to run a deficit.'" To quote Mr Steve Murphy, "That's what's scary."

To sum up, this legislation isn't balanced at all; it is most unbalanced. It deals with the budget deficit but says nothing to make the government eliminate the health deficit, the education deficit, the environment deficit, the deficit in our services in our communities. It certainly won't stop the Harris government from continuing to increase user fees, copayment fees, administrative fees, continuing to jack up tuition. All of these are taxes, and all of those taxes impact the most on lower-, modest- and middle-income families.

We all agree that governments should live within their means, but this legislation would mean the next bad recession in Ontario, whenever it comes, could devastate health care, education and other important public necessi-

ties, even more than this government has devastated them already.

For this reason, we will not be supporting this legislation, and we say shame on Conservatives and Liberals for supporting legislation which has been proven in Nova Scotia and proven in Manitoba to be hollow, to be shallow, to be superficial and to provide absolutely no protection to taxpayers and no protection for the services of health care and education and public necessities and a clean environment that people need. We will be opposing, and we insist that what people want is legislation that deals with all of the deficits, not just some superficial treatment of a financial deficit.

Mr Christopherson: Just to add to the comments of my leader, further evidence that this bill is not going to do at all what the government purports is clearly found by looking at the language that's in the legislation. You reserve for yourself the right to decide, for instance, what the language would be around a referendum question, and you go so far as to include that under no condition can anyone or any entity take the decision of the government to any court or any tribunal for any kind of review.

Come on, give us a break. My leader has pointed out that this is a sham. If anything it substantiates that alone, that language, in my opinion would do it. Not only that, but I have some serious doubts about what the real intent is here. My leader, Howard Hampton, has clearly pointed out what the experience is in other provinces. I can share with this House that there are studies I've referred to in second reading debate that show that American states have made a cottage industry out of finding ways around their own balanced budget legislation. Why? Because of the very cycles that the previous speaker talked about and the fact that there are those trends. You cannot just, no matter how much some of you in this House may think it's OK, one day suddenly send out an edict that says, "Chop \$700 million, \$800 million, \$1 billion out of health care, education, environmental protection, social services" and not expect that's going to cause severe damage to those systems.

Yet, that's exactly what's going to happen, because the only escape clause you've put in there is where there's a 5% reduction in year-over-year revenue in Ontario. The last time that happened, and the only time in the modern economic era that has happened, was in the midst of the deep recession of the early 1990s—to be specific, 1992. That's the only year. That would mean that if you took this legislation and superimposed it on to that time period, which by the way is the worst economic recession North America has ever seen since the Depression of the 1930s, in every other year except 1992 you would have been slashing and burning at a higher rate than you already have in this term of office to bring that budget into balance, as you call it, totally wreaking havoc in our health care system and in our education system, further havoc than you've already caused.

Either way, Ontarians lose. Either this thing is a total sham and you're going to find a way around it because it

doesn't make any common sense—I remind you of those words—or you're going to use it as a shield, and when you want to make more cuts but can't find the political reason to do it, you've got it built into this legislation.

It is quite disconcerting to see that the official opposition in the name of the Liberals feels that somehow this is good legislation and therefore they're going to support it. The fact is that they think they're on to a populist position because that's the way they see you having looked at this. I say with all sincerity that the only ones who are looking at the long-term economic, health, education and public services impacts are the nine New Democrats. Again, that is why we strongly reject this legislation and we intend to put our vote on the record by forcing a divided vote and ensuring that both the government and the Liberals, those who bother to show up for this one, who have the courage of their convictions to be here and vote, are on the record that they thought it was a good idea, because we know the day is going to come when the Liberals will rue supporting the Tories on this. This is bad legislation for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 17, 1999, I am required to interrupt the proceedings and put the question on the motion.

Mr Klees has moved third reading of Bill 7. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; it will be a five-minute bell.

I would read the following:

"Dear Mr Speaker:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on Bill 7 be deferred until November 23, 1999.

"Thank you for your assistance in this matter."

Accordingly, the vote will be deferred.

It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1751.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre de l'Environnement, ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguee aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
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A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 37^e législature

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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 22 November 1999

Lundi 22 novembre 1999



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 novembre 1999

The House met at 1847.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MORE TAX CUTS FOR JOBS, GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT, 1999 LOI DE 1999 RÉDUISANT DE NOUVEAU LES IMPÔTS POUR STIMULER L'EMPLOI, LA CROISSANCE ET LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Mr Skarica, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario / Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 1999 et à apporter d'autres modifications à diverses lois en vue de favoriser un climat propice à l'emploi, à la croissance et à la prospérité en Ontario.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): I would like to advise the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Halton, the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey and also the member for London-Fanshawe.

I'm pleased to lead off the debate today on the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act. If this bill is passed, Ontario taxpayers will be keeping more of their hard-earned money. The bill is a significant step towards our program to cut taxes and create jobs, but it's only a step. The job is not yet finished. Hard-working Ontarians will still pay too much tax. We will continue to work to reduce taxes and to pressure the federal government to do the same.

The More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act, if passed, will provide the legislative framework for many of the tax cuts announced in the 1999 budget, including the 20% reduction in the personal income tax rate committed to in that budget.

Ontarians have benefited from the first 5% reduction of this planned 20% rate reduction since July 1, 1999, when deductions from paycheques were reduced in anticipation of this legislation. It comes on top of the 30% income tax rate cut already received by Ontario families over the past three years.

Other tax-cutting commitments which would be enacted by this bill include extending the land transfer tax refund for first-time new home buyers and increasing the

maximum amount of the refund to \$2,000 from \$1,725, making it easier for families to buy their first home; making the retail sales tax rebate on building materials for farmers permanent to assist farmers in maintaining their properties and to promote economic development in small communities; and enhancing the capital tax exemption for small businesses, encouraging investment that helps to create jobs.

Employment in Ontario has recently climbed sharply by 4,600 jobs in October, following growth of 28,800 jobs in September. This is added to the 540,000 jobs created in our first term. Since 1995, 615,000 jobs have been created in Ontario, accounting for virtually half of all the new jobs in Canada. In October, Ontario's unemployment rate fell to 6% from 6.4% in September, reaching its lowest rate since June 1990, basically the lowest in a decade.

The debate is over—but we're still here—tax cuts create jobs. It is this government's intention to ensure Ontario taxpayers see more of both in the years ahead.

As you will recall, this government was elected in 1995 on a platform that indicated a number of commitments, but one of our main commitments was to cut income tax rates by 30%. At that time it was approximately 58% of the federal rate and was either the highest or one of the highest in the provinces.

I remember when I campaigned back in 1995 and told people we were going to cut the income tax rate by 30%, people just didn't believe it. A lot of people said, "That's nice, that you're promising that, but I just don't believe you're going to do that." I showed them studies I had, that in fact when you cut income taxes, when they're very high and you cut income tax rates, what happens is a number of things. You get an economic stimulus. You get more tax revenue, not less.

People still didn't believe that but they were happy with some of the welfare reforms we were suggesting in the Common Sense Revolution, and a number of other initiatives. I had a number of voters tell me: "I'm going to vote for you. I'm hopeful that you guys will do what you say on welfare, that you're going to cut welfare rates, that you're going to introduce work for welfare, but we don't believe you on the income tax rate cuts." I remember I told a number of them, "No, it makes sense and we are going to do it and if we don't do it, I'll make sure I'll do whatever I have to do to make sure the government does do it." I didn't have to do anything.

As you know, in the last term there were a few times I did say a few things against the government, but on the campaign promises set out in the Common Sense Revo-

lution, the government said what it was going to do and did what it said it was going to do and implemented the reforms as set out in the Common Sense Revolution, one of the main ones being the income tax cut.

At that time, when we started to do those tax cuts, you will recall that there was opposition to the income tax rate cuts. In fact not only did we cut the income tax rate by 30% but we introduced 69 other tax rate cuts on the basis that our economy was struggling, that we were falling behind the rest of the world in productivity and that we needed to cut taxes to stimulate growth.

We weren't the only ones at that time in 1995 to recognize that high taxes were killing prosperity and were killing the potential for job growth.

Lyn McLeod, for example, who was the leader of the Liberals at the time, stated in April 1994: "Ontario's rising tax burden is cited by business as the province's number one job killers. ... The link between higher taxes and unemployment is clear."

The Ontario Liberal Party red book, 1995, at page 8 stated this: "Rising taxes also kill jobs. Paying higher taxes than their competitors is the last thing Ontario businesses can afford. As for Ontario families, many can't afford the taxes they're paying right now."

So there was a consensus, in my opinion, among the public—in fact even the Liberals were saying at that time—that taxes were too high, that they were preventing job growth, which makes it very interesting as to why, then, when we introduced a 30% income tax cut, when we introduced the other 69 tax cuts—and there are 30 more coming in this budget bill—the Liberals voted against each and every one of those 69 tax cuts and each and every one of those income tax rate cuts, even though they recognized that taxes were too high in this province, they were too high in this country and that we were killing prosperity as a result.

The mantra of the opposition parties in the Legislature, and many of the members are here and they will remember, was that this income tax rate, well, it's nice to cut taxes for people but what you're doing is paying for it, basically to help out the rich, by preying on the poor; what you're doing is cutting government programs for the poor. You're borrowing money. We've heard it since the election and during the election: You're borrowing money to pay for the income tax cut.

But surprise, surprise, the fact of the matter is that after each and every tax cut, both the 69 directed targeted tax cuts and the 30% income tax rate cut, government revenues didn't go down; they went up, just like the studies that I had at the time of the election and was showing the people. So in fact the income tax rate cut did not require us to borrow a nickel. The income tax rate cut and the other 69 tax cuts did not force us or mandate us to raid programs that benefited the poor to pay for it. Not only was it self-funding, but we gained more revenues. Why did we gain more revenues? For the simple reason that the economy was stimulated. It was then worthwhile for people to invest in Ontario, because they knew that when they invested their money it wasn't all going to be paid out in taxes to the government.

So the net impact of it was that 540,000 jobs were created during our first term and, as indicated in my preamble, we've cut taxes even further. What has happened? Again, we've created a massive number of new jobs, to the point now where we have 615,000 new jobs in our tenure. While that has been happening, with all these new jobs, obviously people on welfare now have some opportunity that they didn't have before.

So 400,000 people came off welfare, and that of course benefited the government in that we didn't have to pay to keep those people on welfare, and at the same time those people now had jobs and were paying taxes.

With the investment that was happening, with the jobs that were created, what simply happened was that there were more taxpayers, there was more prosperity and government revenues went up. It's pretty simple economics, and it makes you wonder why people fought it in the first place.

It's not an accident. The Financial Post on April 2, 1996, had this prediction, and it's interesting to note that this prediction was at a time when the opposition, the Liberals, the NDP and virtually most of the press were saying: "You cut taxes. That's a reckless thing to do. That means government revenues will go down." I remember the Liberal backbenchers saying: "That's going to cost \$5 billion a year. You have to borrow \$20 billion to pay for this tax cut." Well, they were off by \$11 billion a year, because now we're up \$6 billion more, and that's each and every year.

In any event, the Financial Post indicated on April 2, 1996, that they predicted the tax cut would be a good thing and that we would not lose revenues. "Claims by Ontario Premier, Mike Harris, that revenue lost through cuts in provincial personal income tax will be recouped by increased economic activity may not be as far-fetched as some of his government's opponents claim."

The opposition said: "Yes, it is far-fetched. It's going to cost you \$5 billion a year." At that time, the Financial Post, the studies we had in our party and our campaign commitments indicated that no, this would not bankrupt the province, that in fact it would stimulate economic growth, and we predicted 725,000 jobs would be created over five years.

Some people laughed at us. They said: "You're not going to create 725,000 jobs. That has never happened in Ontario before. That's not possible." Well, here we are four and a half years later at 615,000 jobs, and it looks like, with the continued growth we're having, we need about three months of growth like we've had in October and we'll be at 725,000 jobs. We're doing it—the impossible, according to the opposition.

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What this government did, basically, was we did our homework. We did research on what was happening in other jurisdictions, we moved boldly to cut the income tax rate, to restrain government revenue in areas except for education and health, and what has happened is an economic boom.

You don't have to take my word for it. It's interesting to note the Toronto Star, which has been critical of us

from time to time in the past and has been supportive of the Liberals. On Wednesday, November 10, 1999, this headline appeared: "Economy Booms for First Time in Decades"—there's the headline in the *Toronto Star*—and it is booming. It's interesting to note that there are some arguments, "It's the low Canadian dollar," "Ontario has just been lucky," and those types of excuses. But when you look at what has happened in Ontario, we've had the highest rate of job growth in all of Canada. With about 35% of the population, we've had half the jobs that were created. We've had more job growth than the rest of Canada. In fact, we're creating jobs at a rate higher than in the United States. For example, in 1998, we created over 200,000 jobs, the most job creation in any province in the history of this country. In any event, our job growth rate was higher than the United States. It was higher than our competing jurisdictions in the states surrounding the Great Lakes. In fact, we had the highest job rate growth in the G7. That can't be a coincidence.

We've done that with some very substantial burdens. We have the highest federal income tax burden in 40 years. The federal government, as a percentage of GDP, is now taxing about 18% of GDP, the highest in 40 years. They just don't get it, which I find just amazing. How could they not get the fact that if you cut taxes, that doesn't mean you're going to lose revenue? In fact, the truth of the matter is that if you cut taxes when they're high, unreasonably high, and they sure are in our country—they're the highest in G7.

Judith Andrew, from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, told me recently that property taxes in Ontario are the highest in the G7 nations. So that's pretty tough, to attract investment when you've got the highest federal income tax and the highest property taxes in the G7. What has been our saving grace now is that we have the lowest provincial income tax rate in the country. Sometimes Alberta cuts their taxes so they are a bit lower than ours, and then we cut ours. We're basically in competition with Alberta for the lowest taxes in Canada.

When you look at who the two most prosperous provinces in Canada are, who are they? The answer is simple: Ontario, number one, and Alberta, number two, the two provinces that are in a tax-cutting race right now.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Both of them have Tory governments.

Mr Skarica: Yes, both of them have Tory governments. Both of them have a commitment to balance their budget, which is now happening in Ontario. One of the comments we've heard from the Liberals is, "You've been the last or the second-last province to balance the budget." We're not the last. BC is out there with that economic disaster with the NDP government.

But we started out worse than everybody else. No one else had the \$11-billion or \$12-billion deficit that we started out with. No one else was in debt to the tune, when we took over, of \$90 billion. We had a lot further to go and, contrary to what the opposition says, we weren't prepared to cut health care and we weren't prepared to cut education, so we had to have a plan: Cut

taxes, stimulate economic growth, create jobs, reduce welfare, increase government revenue and basically hold the line on government expenses. We've done all that. What has been the result? We've got the strongest job creation growth, as I've indicated, in the western world.

I'll just read some statistics here that were released on November 8, 1999, a couple of weeks ago. Our GDP rose 1.2% in the second quarter of 1999. That's an annual rate of 5%. The economists, when they saw our budget, with the 30 tax cuts in addition to the 69 and the 30% tax cut and the 20% tax cut on income tax to come, and now we're finally dealing with the property taxes—keep in mind, Judith Andrew, the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, indicated to me and to us that 80% to 90% of her businesses indicate that their primary concern is high property taxes; it's a job killer. So now we're addressing that issue as well, by moving into reducing property taxes by 20%.

Let's look at the impact of our approach and our plan to cut taxes. Our GDP rose at an annual rate of 5%, 1.2% in the second quarter. All the economists, when they saw what we were doing with our tax cuts—30 more in this budget—predicted 3.7%. That was on top of the 200,000 jobs and the tremendous economic growth that we had last year. They figured 3.7% is about the best you could do. The fact of the matter is that we've done way better than that: 5% economic growth, again, leading the country, and we're creating jobs at a startling rate. Ontario employment climbed by 43,600 in October. Add that to 28,000 jobs gained in September, and again, there was another income tax rate cut in July. I would suggest that's not a coincidence. We're the province that's doing the most aggressive tax-cutting campaign; we're the province that has had the most tax cuts in the last four and a half years. When this budget is passed, we'll have had 99 of them.

What's also significant about this legislation is that, yet again, it confirms that we're a government that when we make a commitment, when we say what we're going to do, we do it. This bill is basically a confirmation and a continuation of the commitments that we made in the Blueprint. It's interesting that in the last campaign nobody suggested to me: "You guys aren't going to do what you say in the Blueprint. You're not going to cut taxes like you say in the Blueprint." Nobody said that. They didn't say that because they saw what we did with the Common Sense Revolution. We made a commitment; we gave our word that we were going to do certain things, and we did them. We brought integrity back to politics. Our word meant something.

We weren't like those federal Liberals, who got elected in 1993 and said, "We're going to get rid of the GST," and we're still waiting. In fact, what's the federal Liberal approach right now, when people complain about high taxes? The Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, says, "I know taxes are high, but if you don't like it, leave the country." What arrogance. What kind of an attitude is that? And this is at a time when the federal Liberals are taxing this country at a rate that is higher than anyone

else in the western world. We're at 18% of GDP for federal taxes. Everyone knows, and it's been proven by the Ontario experience, that high taxes kill jobs. If you want to create jobs and you want to create economic stimulus, the answer is really simple: You cut taxes, especially when they are at historic highs, and that's what they are federally. They just won't do it, even though they know it's going to create jobs. Look at us. We've cut taxes in an aggressive way that's unprecedented in Canadian history and we've got job growth at a rate that's the highest in Canadian history.

Finally, I would just like to make one other point. It's essential for the provinces and the federal government to continue to cut taxes, because there are other jurisdictions—the United States in particular, which is our main competitor and our main export destination—which are about to engage in a massive tax-cutting campaign. So are places like Ireland and England. If we don't cut taxes, we're going to be more uncompetitive than ever, with them as well. So we have no choice if we want to remain competitive, if we want to maintain our standard of living and if we want to keep our people at home.

That's another thing the Prime Minister says: "There is no brain drain. People aren't leaving the country for higher-paying jobs." When I campaigned I heard that all the time from places like Wescam in Flamborough and other high-technology places like Nortel, which told me: "We can't attract people. We're losing people to the United States because they pay so much more than we do and the income tax rate is so much less." In some of the states, New York, for example, people's net income after taxes is about 50% higher than it is in Canada.

To conclude, it's an honour to be here debating this bill. It's yet again another part of our aggressive campaign to cut taxes and create jobs and prosperity. At the same time, it is consistent with our Common Sense Revolution and Blueprint commitments, that when we say we're going to do something, we do it.

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Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's a pleasure to stand in the House this evening to talk about the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act. What a wonderful ring that has: "more tax cuts." People in Ontario are beginning to expect to have more tax cuts as time goes by, and this government will continue to deliver that.

In 1995 we had a vision for this province—a vision that this province could be healthier, could be richer, and that the people of Ontario could be better off than they were at that time. We espoused that vision in the Common Sense Revolution in 1995 and we fulfilled those promises in that document. Along came 1999, and we printed a second vision called the Blueprint. That vision was what we saw for this province over the course of our next term of office.

Our party has a very strong vision, unlike some of the other parties that occupy this House, I see that in the Toronto Sun of yesterday the member for York South-Weston was quoted and he said: "What is bad about us is

that we don't stand for very much. We have got to start defining positions.... We need to be bolder, more innovative, and reach across the cross-section of people that make up this province." This was from the Liberal Party of Ontario.

"We are not putting forward a vision of where this province should be going in the future," said Cordiano, adding Liberal support is dwindling among its core supporters." It's sad for a political party to admit that.

We learned long ago that if you have a vision for this province and you adopt a policy that will espouse that vision, the people of this province will support you. Part of our vision was to come up with a 20% tax cut over the next term of our office, and that tax cut has already started to be implemented with a 5% cut in personal income tax rates on July 1, 1999.

No less a body than the International Monetary Fund, the IMF, agrees with the way that Ontario has approached the economy in this province. They believe that tax cuts create jobs, jobs and more jobs, 43,000 new jobs, as my neighbour from Wentworth pointed out in October—43,615 new jobs since we were first elected in 1995—the fastest growth.

Interjection.

Mr Chudleigh: The member for Ottawa West-Nepean agrees that jobs are what governments should be all about. The best social program in the world is a job. People of Ontario deserve those jobs.

The IMF goes on to point out that it "has urged the Liberal government in Ottawa to concentrate its looming surplus on debt reduction and tax cuts, and to resist pressures to crank up spending"—good advice from the International Monetary Fund.

Second, they continue to recommend:

"The IMF—which regularly reviews all member countries—also urged the government to cut deeper into unemployment insurance, saying higher regional benefits discourage unemployed workers from moving to find a job."

I had the opportunity in my younger years—I won't go into saying just how long ago that was—to go to school in the United States, at Michigan State University. That was the team that won their football game on Sunday: 28-35, I think it was. It was a good game too. While there, I met a lot of Americans and I had six roommates. We still visit. They were all males in those days; all my roommates were males. We still get together every two years. Their families are spread across the country. Their unemployment insurance payments don't encourage them to stay in one locale. It's not unusual for the family to have the parents living in Arizona, he's living in Akron, Ohio, and he has sons and daughters in Chicago, St Louis and New York. It's a tremendous thing to bring a country together when a single family lives and visits each other across that country. It's a welding, a uniting of a country. It's something that Canada could well learn from.

The IMF goes on to talk about the economic realities we have in Canada today. We have a solid economy, we have low inflation, we have low interest rates, we have

declining debt-to-GDP ratios and we have the lowest unemployment record in decades.

The federal government is coming up with what they estimate to be a \$95-billion surplus over the next five years. I have heard economists suggest that that is a very low figure, that is a very low estimate of what surplus might be. I've heard that it might be as high as \$135 billion. My goodness, what this country could do with those kinds of tax cuts over the next five years. We would be the richest nation on the face of the earth, with a booming economy that would never look back.

I would encourage the federal government to listen to the International Monetary Fund and to take their advice to heart. I point out for the members that Canada still has the highest tax rate in the G7 even with our 30% tax cut in personal income taxes in Ontario, along with 98 other tax cuts—99 tax cuts in all. What an amazing record for a government: 99 tax cuts in just four years.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): And Allan Rock wants to defeat it. Is he still on that kick?

Mr Chudleigh: Poor Mr Rock. He just doesn't understand. He's a Liberal. I'm afraid he's just not quite up to the job.

Also included in the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act is the land transfer tax, which is a refund to a buyer who is buying a home for the first time. I have three children: Jacquelyn, Raeanne and Eric, and each of them has purchased a new home. I know how much that land tax was a factor in their deciding to buy the house. So often you save for that first down payment and then you find out you've got an additional \$2,000 to pay in land transfer tax. That land transfer tax refund for first-time homeowners is a very big thing. Extending that rebate is very important, especially in rural Ontario, where the cost of housing is slightly less than it is here in the GTA and where people might have the opportunity to purchase a home even faster because that tax rebate is there.

We've also made permanent the retail sales tax rebate on building materials for farmers. This has had a tremendous boom in rural Ontario. To give you an idea of what kind of magnitude this retail sales tax rebate might have on a farmer, if he were building a one-acre greenhouse, for instance, that would amount to about \$30,000 that he wouldn't have to find the financing for and he wouldn't have to maintain that capital cost through his output. It has created a tremendous boom especially in the Leamington area, in the Niagara area, where greenhouse production is dominant in this province.

It's interesting that so much of our greenhouse production is exported south of the border. It started with potted mums many years ago, where we were exporting potted mums to the States in huge quantities: 10,000, 20,000, 50,000 potted mums per week during the winter were going into the States, and that number has continued to grow. It has always impressed me that here we are in what is seen to be a cold country and we're exporting a greenhouse product to a warm country, for instance Florida or Arizona, where you could grow these under shade cloth and export them into the New England states,

but that wasn't happening. Ontario ingenuity from the farm community was building greenhouses, heating those greenhouses, producing what was without exception one of the finest products available in the marketplace in North American and exporting that product to the south in a very profitable way.

Following on the heels of those exports, we got into the bedding plant and transplant business. When I first started in the food processing business, we were importing tomato transplants, tens of millions of them a year, from the Georgia area. Today every one of those transplants is produced in a greenhouse right here in Ontario, along with the vast majority of, in fact I think almost all, bedding plants that go into the home market. They're all produced in greenhouses and that greenhouse production will be enhanced with the continuation or the making permanent of the sales tax rebate on building materials.

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That rebate is also going to be available for use on heritage buildings until December 31, 2000, up to a maximum of \$3,000 per heritage building, another extremely important aspect of our countryside. All too often you go through the countryside and you see the marvellous banked barns that were built around the turn of the century, up until the early part of the 1950s, when most barns were no longer constructed in that fashion. These monstrous banked barns are disappearing from the Ontario countryside and the Ontario landscape, and it's a shame to see these things go. They no longer fit into the mechanized aspect of agriculture but they are a marvellous piece of our heritage. If a few dollars will assist in maintaining some of these heritage buildings for the future, I'm pleased to see it happen.

The companies in Ontario through the Canadian Federation of Independent Business have done surveys which have talked about the things that affect their businesses the most. One of those things is the burden of taxes. In the survey that they conducted in July 1991, the number one item was the total tax burden on businesses in Ontario: 81.8%, almost 82%, of the companies responding said that the total tax burden was the one thing they wanted to see lifted off their shoulders or reduced that would have the greatest effect on their ability to continue in business, to grow in business, hire more people and enter into more prosperity.

That prosperity has been improving in Halton. I'm pleased to say that a number of companies—Gordon Foods, which has located in my riding since the election, is continuing to grow and prosper. Axis Logistics has more than doubled their warehouse space and increased their business phenomenally since the election. Matthews steel, which located in about 1996, I think, in Halton, has been growing and expanding ever since. Co-Steel, which is a metal recycling facility, has been growing by leaps and bounds. I don't know what the percentage is; I'm sure the percentage increase they've experienced is into four figures. It's just a huge growth, and it goes on and on. SKD, an automotive manufacturing plant, has increased its floor space three times and has increased its sales five times since 1995. Karmax, when I was first

elected, had fewer than 600 employees, and they are employers of well over 1,100 to date.

I'm pleased to have had this time tonight to talk about the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act. That is what is going to give Ontario a vision for the future: more jobs, more growth and more prosperity.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's a pleasure and a privilege to rise and speak on the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act.

Before I get into that, I think it's important to go back to pre-1990, when high taxes under a Liberal government created an economy that created high unemployment. What we saw during that time was that the further taxes went up, it was directly proportional to government income going down. When that happened, health care was in jeopardy, our education system was in jeopardy. Not only that, but the deficit went up and continued to go up. Certainly all of the evidence at that time was of an economy that was not serving anybody.

Just to relate that to my riding, several subdivisions had started during that time: one was Bonaventure; another one was Summerside; another, Trafalgar Woods. Although these lots were there, there were no homes and there was no construction, and people were without jobs through no fault of their own because of a government that had let them down.

To the credit of the leader of the third party, they inherited an economy that had been run into the ground by the Liberal government prior to that. They did their best, but somehow at the end of the day that direction had started.

In 1995, Premier Harris was elected with the promise to reduce taxes by 30%, and that he did, sir. The reason he had to do it was because he had some very difficult decisions to make: the high deficit, declining health care, the declining education system. By reducing taxes, not only by 30%, government revenue went up by \$6 billion, again evidence that the further the tax rate is reduced, it's directly proportional to government income going up. I suppose we can call it the new math. It's a math that only the Conservative governments in this country have adopted and have chosen to follow.

After that, in those three subdivisions that I talked about in my riding—Bonaventure, Trafalgar Woods, Summerside—guess what? Homes started sprouting all over the place as friends that I went to school with at Clarke Road high school starting building homes, raising families. Not only that, but their parents remained in some of the older homes. Pre-1990, many were forced to sell their homes and were unable to be around their children and grandchildren, again because they had been let down by a Liberal government that did not care for their future.

It's a pleasure to further continue in the direction of the first mandate where we will further reduce taxes by another 20%, thereby creating more jobs in our riding. More people will be able to hold on to their homes and more homes will be built. I certainly look forward to the further jobs that we will create through this tax cut.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey):

I too would like to address the House with respect to Bill 14, the short title of which is the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act. The long title is An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario.

Those two titles say essentially the same thing: to create a climate and an opportunity to expand the economy of this province, to provide more jobs, to provide more funding for our social services, for the poor in this province. We intend to create the climate that will do all of those things.

You ask yourself, how do you create that climate? How do you encourage new businesses within this province, small businesses to start up? How do you encourage businesses from outside the province, whether it be from other provinces or other countries, to come and invest here, or from the United States to come and invest here? How do you create that climate which will certainly create more jobs, more revenue, and hence more funding for many of the social problems that we have in this province?

I firmly believe, as do all the members on this side at least, that the answer to that is tax cuts. We're convinced that that is the answer, and we've been trying to persuade the federal government to change their philosophy. Recently, Minister Eves, the finance minister, met with the federal officials and has stated clearly that the federal government still doesn't understand. They don't understand that tax cuts create jobs and economic growth. The statement that was just recently made by the federal Liberal government in Ottawa clearly exemplifies the difference between the Ontario approach and the federal approach.

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Now that the federal government has said, and the member from Halton—you know, different figures are being thrown around. The figure that I have and that came from our Minister of Finance—what he was led to believe—was that the federal government has revealed that they are looking at a surplus of \$100.5 billion. That's a lot of money. Then on top of that there's another surplus flying around. There's the surplus of the employment insurance fund, which is expected in the year 2000 to be \$30 billion. Mr Martin has said they are only going to reduce the premiums by 15 cents when their very own actuary said, "Reduce it by 55 cents." That \$30-billion surplus is well in excess of the \$10 billion needed to run the program, and they've got a \$30-billion surplus. I'm not even talking about the surplus that the federal government has.

Clearly, the federal government cannot assume that a budget surplus means they can now spend. That appears to be what they're saying. There have been little leaks—talk about leaks, as the opposition talks about—about how they're going to spend all this money on new programs, which I'm not so sure is the answer. They are ignoring taxpayers' calls from all across this province to lower the tax burden.

Members before me—the member from Hamilton-Wentworth, I believe, and Halton and others from our side—have given examples. All across this country there have been cries, there have been pleas, from people from all parties, including the federal Liberal Party. There are people in the Liberal Party who have pleaded for a reduction in taxes. Why? Because why would you invest in a country or in a province which has high taxes when you can go just down south and the taxes aren't as high? Why would you do that? To remain competitive, we must reduce our taxes.

We promised in the Blueprint, which the member from Halton-Wentworth has showed the House, that under our government all existing government programs would be reviewed and would be justified for cost, necessity and efficiency. We believe the federal Liberal government should do exactly the same thing.

All of this comes to the bill, Bill 14, which is a budget bill. There's nothing new in this bill. We said we were going to do these things, and now we're going to do them, assuming that this passes. Anyone who sat through the budget knows exactly what's in it, because that's what this does. With the time allowed for me, I only intend to talk about a couple of things, if I have time.

One is part XIII dealing with the land transfer tax credits to new home buyers, the extension of that and the increasing of the amount. I think there's a penalty provision that was recommended by the Provincial Auditor in the 1998 annual report. We're implementing Mr Peters's recommendation on that.

Part XX deals with farming, some of the credits with respect to tax that are being given to the farmers of this province.

If I have time, I will deal with those things.

There were a couple of press releases which came out, just to emphasize how I hope the members of the opposition, and particularly the federal Liberal government—what's good for the country is good for Ontario, and what's good for Ontario is good for Canada. It's a philosophy of cutting taxes that hopefully the members of the opposition will agree on.

The leader of the third party is here, and he has raised some questions about that. The members of the Liberal Party have expressed—well, I'm not too sure what the Liberal Party is saying, quite frankly. But it was interesting. There were a couple of press releases out just recently, over the weekend. There was one from Sault Ste Marie, from Ottawa and a few other places. I'm only going to refer to one of them; that's out of the Southam newspapers. It has to do with some comments that were made by the International Monetary Fund. I believe the member for Halton briefly referred to that. The International Monetary Fund is pushing the federal government to cut taxes over spending. They are urged by the International Monetary Fund to abandon this 50-50 approach which the Ottawa people have been pushing forward.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): David, tell us something that's new and surprising.

Mr Tilson: I'm glad you know all about this, member of the third party, and I hope it finally reaches you. I'm

saying it over and over, yes. What I'm saying is nothing that you haven't heard before, but for some unearthly reason the members of the third party, particularly you, don't get it. You don't understand it. You don't understand basic economy. You showed that when you were in power from 1990 to 1995. Your party and your government were an absolute disaster. You proved you couldn't do it. So don't come along to me and say, "Tell us something new." We're going to tell you this because you obviously don't get it.

I don't want to put the leader of the third party to sleep—

An emergency alarm sounded.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Please continue.

Mr Tilson: Something happened. As the lights dim in this place, I'll try to see the press release which came from the Sault Star.

"The International Monetary Fund is pushing the Chrétien government to abandon its 50-50 formula for divvying up future surpluses and instead devote the lion's share to debt and tax reduction

"The report released Friday by Finance Minister Paul Martin argued that cutting the debt and taxes would be more beneficial economically in the long run than increasing spending on health and education.

"Debt reduction and income tax reform should be the top priorities in allocating the prospective fiscal surpluses," it said in its annual financial and economic assessment of Canada.

"While some additional moderate spending initiatives in the areas of education and health care would be useful, debt reduction and reform of income taxation are likely to produce more significant long-term benefits for the economy."

That is what this bill is all about, creating "more significant long-term benefits for the economy," not the short-term business that the leader of the third party and members of the Liberal Party have been espousing. We're not saying that. We want a strong economy to deal with the problems we've had.

The press release from the Sault Star goes on:

"Fears that the Liberals"—and this is the federal Liberals, of course—"were embarking on a massive spending spree were heightened by the recent leak of finance department projections of \$47 billion in spending priorities over the coming five years.

"Martin, in releasing the report, made no reference to the International Monetary Fund's call for faster tax and debt reduction or its criticism of new EI spending plans."

He didn't even refer to this report, which further "urged the Chrétien government to speed up its pace of debt reduction, not only devoting the \$3 billion a year contingency reserve to paying off debt but also any extra revenue that comes from stronger than forecast economic growth.

"Because of the uncertainties of the future costs of supporting an aging population"—and that's important when we talk about the long-term aspects of this: the

ability to pay taxes, the needs. Our population is getting older. So if we're talking about lower taxes creating more revenue and we've got an aging population, what's wrong with reducing taxes for that aging population? What's wrong with that?

The Sault Star's final comment is, "Because of the uncertainties of the future costs of supporting an aging population, the IMF said now would be a good time to get the debt down faster to be better prepared to be able to cover those costs. Debt charges remain the single largest federal expenditure, eating up 27 cents of every dollar of federal revenue.

"The IMF also said Ottawa still has lots of scope for tax cuts."

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That's what the International Monetary Fund has said. I hope that all members of this House, all of the opposition members specifically, will encourage the federal government to get into this philosophy which is catching on all across the world.

I did mention that I was going to briefly talk about the land transfer tax amendments, which is in part XIII of Bill 14, which extends the credits and also increases the credits. The new section which is being added to the act authorizes the Minister of Finance to impose a penalty if a taxpayer fails to pay tax due to fraud or a wilful default. The penalty is to be "the greater of \$500 and 25%" of the unpaid taxes attributable to fraud or wilful default.

This came out of comments that were made by the Provincial Auditor, who requested exactly what Minister Eves has put forward. I obviously don't have time to get into that. The Provincial Auditor, starting at page 88 of the 1998 auditor's report, gives an excellent summary of the land transfer tax program, what it does, what it's done in the past, how it's paid. Then it goes on to make some recommendations with respect to fraud.

The recommendation was: "The ministry should consider introducing additional penalties to defer tax evasion through neglect, carelessness, wilful default or fraud. In addition, in order to encourage the timely payment of taxes when due, all applicable penalties should be routinely assessed." That was recommended by the auditor and that's what this Bill 14 is doing.

Interjection.

Mr. Tilson: I'd like to welcome the member for St Catharines to the House and look forward to his comments in the future.

I'm a great believer in how the housing market goes is how the economy goes. If you have a good process for building new homes around the province, it's going to provide jobs for the people building the homes, plus all the spinoffs that go on. I think we should do what we can to encourage the construction of new homes. So we are extending that another year with respect to first-time buyers. As well, we're increasing the maximum refund. We hope this will help families to buy their first home and to support job creation in the housing industry.

There are statistics from the ministry that say that for every new home constructed, at least two and a half years

of full-time work are created and each resale contributes to about \$17,000 in economic spinoffs, or approximately 0.5 person-years of full-time employment. In other words, new home construction creates greater economic activity than resales. Of course, it will not apply to resales; it will apply to the construction of new homes because the aim of Bill 14 is to create an economy which will create more jobs and will in turn improve the long-term effects of the economy of this province.

The maximum land transfer tax refund is being increased to \$2,000. Again, the purpose of that is to continue to help families buy their first home and to support job creation and the housing industry. So it's twofold: Make it more affordable for new people wanting to buy homes and, in turn, create improvements to the housing industry and the construction industry.

To further assist first-time home buyers with the purchase of their newly constructed home and to benefit those who purchase homes valued at more than \$200,000: The maximum refund of \$1,725 under the current program amounts to the land transfer tax paid on a home valued at \$200,000. The proposed maximum refund of \$2,000, which it has been increased to, amounts to the land transfer tax on a home valued at \$227,500. There will be material in our constituency offices, if this legislation is passed—and I sure hope it will be—that will explain to those new home buyers what the qualifications are to apply for that refund which is being extended.

Those essentially are my comments with respect to this legislation. I just want to close by giving you some of the details, some facts that show how I believe that what we've done in this province for improving the economy has gone great strides from where we were in 1995.

In the month of October, Ontario employment climbed by 43,600. Ontario's unemployment rate fell sharply, from 6.4% to 6%, in October. This is the lowest level since June 1990. Full-time employment was up 33,000. Part-time employment rose 11,000. In October, youth employment rose 5,400. The youth unemployment rate fell from 13.2% to 12.7% in October. Since the throne speech that was given back in September 1995, employment in Ontario has increased by 615,000 net new jobs. Since the first instalment of Ontario's personal income tax cut in July 1996, Ontario has gained 553,000 net new jobs. Since the June 1995 election, Ontario has gained 610,000 net new jobs. Nationally, employment was up by 80,000 in October. The national jobless rate fell from 7.5% to 7.2%.

Tax cuts are working. Pass Bill 14.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What has happened, of course, is that this government, as the Dominion Bond Rating Service would say—a bastion of conservatism if there ever was one—was losing \$5 billion a year in potential revenue that it could have had. That's why it has never balanced its budget since it's been in power.

What I would like to know is how on earth we're going to get more money for ophthalmologists in St Catharines if indeed you're going to give the money away in more tax cuts. I've been getting calls from right across the province from people who are saying, "What the heck is going on with ophthalmologists?" I have to explain to them that we have only 12 or 13 ophthalmologists in St Catharines. Some of them are not working full-time. For a variety of reasons, they cannot be full-timers. We need 14, even by the very restrictive regulations of the Ministry of Health of Ontario.

They hatched a great plan. They said: "Never mind, we'll still give tax cuts. We'll just send those elderly people down the QEW." It's an awful place to drive, along the QEW. I have to drive it; I know what it's like. Today, I noticed the Gardiner Expressway was shut going both ways. That often happens on the QEW now. "We're going to send elderly and sick patients way down the road to Hamilton." Then I asked some of the people from Hamilton: "What about your ophthalmologists? You've got 20 for your general area." They said: "They're already too busy. You have to wait several weeks to get an appointment with an ophthalmologist in Hamilton." So not only is it an imposition for people in the Niagara region, but I can also tell you that it's going to cause havoc in Hamilton. Is there a solution, at least in the short term? There is. That solution is to raise the cap for ophthalmologists in the Niagara region. Then people would appropriately get good eye care, because we have, on a per capita basis in the Niagara region, the most elderly population in all of Ontario.

But you people are busy giving away the money to the rich. The richest people in the province benefit the most from the tax break. Meanwhile, people are suffering with their health care in Niagara. I say that should be our priority.

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Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'll try to get this discussion back on track a little. The member for St Catharines always goes off and talks about ophthalmologists. Perhaps they aren't working after June because of the cap, but the real issue is getting this Ontario economy moving again.

I would like to relate a very brief story about a gentleman in my riding who was out of work in 1995 and came to me. We managed to get him some help in computer training. Out of that, he got a job in 1996-97 working in a factory that makes women's purses, one of the key areas of the Ontario economy. Perhaps it doesn't have all glitz and glamour of high technology, but he was relating to me the other day, when I was helping his father over an insurance policy, that they have hired another 30 people in addition to what they had in 1996-97, which was about 32. That's 30 more success stories. When you look at some of those people in terms of where they were coming from, they had been out of work for a long time.

Interjection.

The member of the New Democratic Party says, "What's new?" We have some good news for him as

well. That is that his Saskatchewan brethren, the NDP, a group that have resisted, like the federal glibs, for so long bringing about any kind of meaningful tax reduction, have recommended—believe it—an aggressive tax reduction strategy for Saskatchewan over the next five years. Even there they are learning. If we could only get our federal brethren to believe wholeheartedly in tax reduction. I was at a meeting the other night where my federal counterpart said that the international tax rates federally are a little out of kilter and therefore we have a competitiveness problem. We sure do, and that's why we're moving so fast in Ontario.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'm pleased to rise, for a couple of minutes at least, to speak to the comments of the government members. They've done very well to carry the message they've been given to carry. The only thing is, last Friday, when I was back in my riding, I met with a number of interested groups in Essex county when it comes to our health care system. The government would lead us to believe that they, through their effort of tax cutting, have created one of the greatest health care systems one could ever have.

Let me tell you, I don't know whether the members across meet with different individuals in their constituencies than I do, but it certainly isn't part of this budget that I can see to make the situation any better when it comes to long-term care in some of our facilities, when it comes to at least a direction in which they're going with long-term care to relate to the level of care that is given in nursing homes. In fact, the audit is done on these nursing homes; they come in and determine the level of care of the individuals in that nursing home and then the auditors go away saying, "We have no idea what the ministry is going to do with this, because there are no policies, there's no direction, there's nothing in place so that you can get some idea of how our assessment of the needs in this particular long-term-care facility is going to be handled."

On the surface, they tell us it's a great management scheme they have in place, but it's what happens underneath the water, it's how the duck's feet are moving. Are they moving at all, or are they going in reverse? That's something we hope to find in this budget.

Mr Hampton: Since I've heard the government members go on and on, I think it's only fair to comment on some of the things they've had to say. Some of the government members somehow believe that they have the mantra of tax reduction. I want them to know that in fact if you add up all of the different fee increases by this government that affect modest- and lower-income and middle-income families—tuition fee increases, prescription medicine copayment fee increases, motor vehicle registration fee increases, fishing licence fee regulations, hunting licence fee increases—it far surpasses anything that middle- and modest- and lower-income families have had by way of a reduction in the income tax. The people who've benefited from the reduction in the income tax have overwhelmingly been people who have very high incomes. That's been your real tax strategy. You increase

taxes on lower-, modest- and middle-income families; you cut taxes on people who are already the most well-off. That's what it boils down to.

You know what? NDP governments have reduced taxes but they've done it after they balanced their budgets. Saskatchewan balanced their budget five years ago and, after paying down some of the debt that was left to them, they are now in a position where they can reduce taxes. But I want you to note, the taxes that they're going to reduce overwhelmingly will impact on lower-, modest- and middle-income families, not the highest-income families.

Finally, you want to take credit for the American economic boom which has resulted in us selling more cars, more trucks, more aircraft, more pulp and paper, more lumber than ever before into that market. Please, be a little more modest than that. The American boom has helped us much more than any tax scheme of yours.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Tilson: I'd like to briefly comment, if I have the time, on all of the comments made. The member for—

Mr Hampton: We were generous.

Mr Tilson: I'll do my best. You're last; I may not reach you.

The member for St Catharines got into his usual speech. One of the comments he did talk about was the bond-rating process, and that may or may not be a fair comment. The only issue is, the economy of this province had become so terrible, almost on the edge of bankruptcy. It's not easy to turn around a province that has a deficit of \$11.3 billion. Everyone has seen how difficult it is to modernize our government. It's not easy to do that, so naturally it's going to take some time.

I'd like to thank the member for Etobicoke North. He asked the question how we're going to get the economy moving again. I believe we have already got the economy moving again, which I think he said, with our economic policies.

The member from Essex talked about social problems. It's a typical Liberal comment, of course. You spend money first and then you devise policies. You spend money you don't have. That's what the Liberals have done. That's how they started us in this mess that we're in.

I've saved for last, of course—

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: I've only got 23 seconds.

The member for Kenora-Rainy River, the leader of the third party, started talking. If you make over \$80,000, he wanted to tax the heck out of those people. That was his pitch—tax, tax, tax—and he hasn't changed.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 14 and to inform the House that I'll be sharing my time with the members for St Catharines, Prince Edward-Hastings and Essex.

This is quite a comprehensive bill, as the public may or may not be aware. It's well over 100 pages long, almost an omnibus bill.

I'd like to begin with a few of the elements within the bill. The first part of the bill deals with ambulances and some of the government members said, "We did what we said we would do." Let me remind you, what you've done and what this bill does is to download, dump ambulance services onto property taxes. Some of the members who were here in the previous government a few years ago would remember that Mike Harris appointed his own hand-selected group of people to look at what services should be funded off property taxes and what services should be funded off provincial revenues. That was headed up by someone called David Crombie. There were 14, all picked by Mike Harris personally. They said, "Don't do this." I carry this around with me. This was the panel's recommendation. In terms of dumping or downloading ambulance services on to property taxes, the panel said this: "The panel strongly opposes such a move. We are unanimous in this view." The entire panel said, "Don't do it." But when you get this bill, the very first thing that's in it, part I, is the Ambulance Act, and it is downloading ambulance costs on to property taxes.

2000

Surely if there is one thing that should be, to use the jargon, seamless, it should be our health care system. When an individual, perhaps at home, needs to come to the hospital for day care, for day surgery, for a clinic, surely we shouldn't be funding that off property taxes. That's what Mike Harris's own group said, "Don't do it." But Mike Harris decided to do it, and, temporarily, we were told today in a briefing, 50% of the costs will be handled by the province. But that's only temporary. That can be lifted with the stroke of a pen, and it will be.

When members say, "We did what we said we would do," I say to the people of Ontario, do you really want the quality of your health care system depending on the level of property taxes available in the area you live in? Will there be one health care system for those who live in tax-assessment-rich areas and another for those who live in tax-assessment-poor areas? Surely that doesn't make any sense for a health care system. But that's literally the first part of the bill.

The second thing the government members said was, "We're doing what we said we would do." I remember very clearly—this is the old Common Sense Revolution. I carry it around. This is on the sale of assets, where the government is selling off public assets. Here's what the government said at the time: "The money we make from such asset sales will not go into the government accounts. Every penny will go directly to pay down the \$80-billion provincial debt."

The only thing that has changed here is that it used to be \$80 billion, before Mike Harris came in; it's now \$122 billion. What used to be \$80 billion is \$122 billion. What happened was that Harris sold the 407, got \$1.6 billion, and in order to spend it the way he wants to spend it, he has now got to change the law. That's what we're doing. That's another part of this bill that the public should be aware of.

You thought we would be using the sale of assets to pay down this horrendous debt, \$80 billion when he

wrote the plan, \$121 billion now, if you look at the budget, after four years of Mike Harris. He said it was \$80 billion when he wrote this plan; it's now \$121 billion. He is now saying: "I've changed my mind. When we sell off the assets of the province, we won't use that any longer to pay down the debt. We will use it to pay for the groceries. We will use it to pay for the day-to-day operations." It is a substantial change.

The reason I focus on this is because we now see municipalities planning to do essentially the same thing, saying, "Listen, we're going to sell off our assets, and we'll use it to pay for our day-to-day operations." The reason I raise this so strongly is because the government members said, "We're doing what we said we would do." What you promised was that when we sell off the assets, we would use it to reduce the debt. It's not happening.

I might add that I continue to remind members because I'm afraid the government will use the 407 model as the model for selling off our assets. I think the users of the 407 have been so badly treated by the government of Ontario. Here's what happened to them. The government built that road for about \$1.6 billion and sold it to the private sector for \$3.2 billion. They "made a profit" of \$1.6 billion, put it in the budget, and now they're changing the law so they can spend it. But how did they sell it off for that amount? They told whoever bought it, "We'll sell it to you for 99 years." I can remember standing here in the Legislature debating the bill and the government members guaranteeing us they wouldn't sell it for more than 30 years. They sold it off for 99 years. They told the buyer: "Listen, this is a guaranteed money-maker for you. As a matter of fact, we will guarantee you can take the tolls up every year for 15 years at inflation plus 2%. Furthermore, if anybody doesn't pay the tolls to you, they won't be able to renew their licence." That's the second part of this bill that the public should be aware of: that we are in this bill, rather than reducing debt, permitting the government to use these funds for operations.

I want to also talk about a comment the government members made about the way the government spends the taxpayers' money. One of the members mentioned in their platform, "Under our government, all existing programs are reviewed and must be justified for cost, necessity and efficiency." Well, as it turns out of course, less than a week ago our Provincial Auditor issued their annual report. The public I think understand that the Provincial Auditor is someone who is hired on the taxpayers' behalf to act as an independent watchdog on government spending. That office has a budget of \$7.5 million, and its role is to be independent, to look out for the taxpayers' interests and to provide an objective, unbiased analysis of how the government is doing on spending the taxpayers' hard-earned money. It's well worth a read. This may sound like typical opposition rhetoric, but I think anyone who would read the four reports that have now been produced on the Harris government—the 1996 report was the first year, the 1997, the 1998, and this is the 1999. This really is a report card on the first four years of the Harris government.

Here's what the auditor said. The auditor was asked, "You've now seen them in action for more than four years"—the Harris government. "From your perspective, do you think that under this government our tax dollars and the services provided by the government are being provided more efficiently and more effectively?" What did the auditor say? "Well, as my report points out, they really aren't."

In other words, after four years, when Premier Harris has promised that the government would operate more efficiently and more effectively, the independent auditor, who has the responsibility for giving us an unbiased, objective view on it, says that's not the case.

He goes on. He says that the improvements aren't very noticeable at all. As a matter of fact, the accountability has to be there for the spending of the public funds and it's just not in place. Later on he says, and I think this is quite strong language for an auditor or for anyone looking at the government books, "Clearly, the taxpayer is taken for a ride and necessary follow-up almost dies for lack of attention."

The auditor went on to point out that in the family services operation there are almost 200,000 young people who are not being dealt with properly. The payments are in arrears from the deadbeat dads, and that's up dramatically. He points out that on outsourcing, and the auditor was very strong on this point, the government outsourced, for example, road maintenance, and it looks like it cost more money, not less money. Actually, the government then went out and spent our taxpayers' dollars hiring two more auditors, who proved the point for the Provincial Auditor.

Don't take my word for it. I would encourage the public to get a copy of the auditor's report and reach your own conclusions on how well Premier Harris is managing your finances.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Terribly.

Mr Phillips: "Terribly," as my colleague said. It is throughout the report. One thing he's particularly concerned about, I might add, is that it is young people, vulnerable young people, who are being particularly hard hit.

2010

I wanted to also talk a little bit—because much of the talk has been around the finances and the effects of the tax cut. Trying to be as objective as one can be, if you look at the government's own budget, what do they attribute the growth in the economy to? What is the single most important reason the economy is growing, not according to the opposition, but according to the government? It is exports. The government points out in its budget document that in 1989 about 27% of Ontario's gross domestic product was exports. In 1998, nine years later, it's almost 50%. In 1998 it was 48.9%. I dare say this year it's well over 50%.

It's important, when we are trying to assess why the economy has been growing, what has been driving the economy—let's just accept at face value the government's own analysis, that it is exports. My point on the

tax cut has always been this: The last time a Conservative government balanced the budget was 1969. That's not me speaking. I went to the legislative library and asked the question, "When was the last time there was a balanced budget in Ontario?" This is the research officer and this is their independent analysis of it. In 1989-90, as the auditor said, there was a surplus. The last time a Conservative government balanced the budget was in 1969-70. I urge you to look at that.

What has happened is, when Mike Harris became Premier, the federal government and the other provinces had a deficit of \$50 billion; that's the annual deficit they were running. Last year, the federal government and the other provinces ran a surplus of about \$6 billion. It went from a \$50-billion deficit to a \$6-billion surplus. We in Ontario continue to run deficits.

When I talk to my business friends, they say, "He has certainly balanced the budget." He still has not balanced the budget. "Yes, but he has reduced the debt." Are you kidding me? When Premier Harris became the Premier, the debt of the province of Ontario was \$88 billion. These are their own numbers. It's now \$121 billion, although a portion of that is Hydro. The real number is probably about \$112 billion. The debt of the province is up almost 25%, and still not a balanced budget. When I say we've had to borrow the money for the tax cut, I believe that. The government always puts in its budgets the estimate of how much revenue they're losing as a result of tax cuts. They themselves have said it's roughly \$5 billion a year in forgone revenue.

It's important, when we debate tax cuts—and I appreciate that Harris won an election. He got elected; he won. I will say to the people of Ontario, look at what has happened to the debt of the province of Ontario. My colleague mentioned the credit rating. Mike Harris has now gone four and a half years and the credit rating of the province has not changed a bit. Under the NDP government, it was downgraded three times. It was AAA in 1990; it was downgraded to what's called AA-; three downgrades. I remember when Mike Harris was on this side of the House, he used to taunt Premier Rae about the credit rating. We're now four and a half years into Mike Harris's regime and the credit rating has not changed a bit; it's still the same as it was under Premier Rae.

Simply look at the facts when you are judging whether this has been the right policy. Firstly I'd say, recognize what has driven Ontario's economy. It's exports. By the way, it's extremely important all of us understand that. There's no place in the world now that relies as much on exports as Ontario does: 90% to the US, and well over half that is auto. I say, thank goodness for the US. It has been the engine driving Ontario's economy. As all of us know, it's always uneasy to rely that much on one customer, if you will, the US, in the case of an economic downturn. As I say, when we're debating the merits of the tax cut, it's important to recognize that.

This bill also has a number of other extremely important elements in it. I do want to say that there are changes made to the Ontario Securities Commission and the

Toronto Stock Exchange that I believe are important and will strengthen the securities commission. Again I say that we now rely heavily on the securities commission to monitor our financial markets, and I think that will be a useful tool.

There's also probably about 40 pages in here of more changes to our property tax bill. It's property tax bill number 8. For those of us who follow the property tax debate, this is the eighth in the last 24 months, I believe—the eighth attempt to get the property tax situation fixed. It's got some fairly heavy-handed tools in here. It orders municipalities to give the province their financial by-laws. It gives the government a very heavy hand in dealing with municipalities. It also continues to try and put Band-Aids on the property tax bills. In fact, it goes back two years now for trying to fix problems created by previous bills. It was retroactive—

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): Is it right yet?

Mr Phillips: My colleague says, "Is it right yet?" It probably isn't. If you were betting, it's still not right. As the problems created by this come out, I don't have any doubt we'll be dealing with another property tax bill in the very near future.

Mr Murdoch: What would you do, Gerry?

Mr Phillips: My colleagues always say, what would we do? What we would do is put—

Mr Bradley: I would let him speak.

Mr Phillips: He'll get an opportunity to speak later.

I would say that the first thing you would be wise to do would be to focus and spend some time on managing the province well. I go back to what the auditor said, and that is that in his judgment—

Mr Bradley: They're going to fire the auditor.

Mr Phillips: They may try to fire the auditor, because he's telling it like it is.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The truth.

Mr Phillips: Like the truth. And he says, when asked, "Are things getting any better," "Well, as my report points out, they really aren't."

The member says, what would I do? The first thing I would do if I were the government, I'd say, "Let's try and manage things around here." What did the government try and do? They got mad at the auditor. What the auditor said was: "If you don't like the message, you attack the messenger. I have a message they clearly don't like, and I will stick by it."

The government doesn't like to hear that it's mismanaging things. The Minister of Finance today I think was quite forthcoming in saying that it looked to him like several of the ministries were not doing their job.

By the way, the auditor was very clear. He said, "In 1995, I made recommendations to the government, but they didn't follow through and therefore we're making the same recommendations again." This is in an area where we're spending hard-earned taxpayers' dollars—\$800 million of it. The auditor, four years ago, told them what to do and they didn't follow through on it.

I guess Premier Harris finds it very convenient to be out attacking squeeze kids, and I understand his polling

suggests that the squeegee kids are good to attack. But I would say to the public, would he not be advised to spend just as much time on managing the \$60 billion that the government's spending as we are on trying to get after the 200 squeegee kids? You can get after the squeegee kids, but I say he would be far better spending his time fixing these problems.

So I'm pleased to begin the debate on what's really an omnibus bill, and look forward to future debate.

2020

Mr Bradley: No wonder the member for Scarborough-Agincourt has so much credibility. He's familiar with all the facts and figures associated with the government. Any independent-minded person, objective person, can't help but be impressed by the intervention that is made by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, the Liberal critic in the field of finance and economic affairs.

The one thing that he doesn't have, the one factor he didn't mention, of course, was that the government has now implemented 675 new tax increases in the form of user fees in the province. Now, I'm looking for more of them. I haven't had a chance this week to look for more of them, but there are all kinds of them out there. Who do they impact? Do they impact the people who have the cocktails at the Albany Club, the exclusive Tory outpost in Toronto? No, they do not. But they impact upon people of modest means in this province.

I notice the downloading taking place again. I was at a meeting where there were a lot of people from the Downtown Association in St Catharines. On the seventh version of the property tax bill it had been changed again and the province implemented a formula that did not allow these individuals to get the kind of reduction through assessment that they were deserving of. They were angry. Of course, they were turning their guns—and I say that only figuratively—at the municipal government. I had to explain to them that Mike Harris and his band of merry Tories had downloaded an additional \$18 million in services and the financial responsibility for those services to the local level.

Now, I see this bill deals with the ambulance services. It's just absolutely foolish to know that ambulance services, a form of health care, would be on the local property tax. It will probably be in some areas farmed out to privatization, because they're lining up at the border now, Rural/Metro and other major companies in the US which charge fantastic amounts of money to ride in their ambulances and for the care that's in those ambulances. They're lining up at the border wanting to come over here to take part in what Ontario is doing.

They're also selling off assets. If you listen to the right wing, whether it's in this House or on municipal councils, they want to sell everything; they want to have a fire sale. Why? They want to have an immediate tax reduction or they want to have some grandiose project that they think is going to be good for their particular community and they want to sell off all these assets. The latest asset is Hydro. Some of them actually want to sell off the power generation or the power distribution in their

area and give that to the private sector, who will gouge the people of the community. Others are saying, "Let's keep it but let's make a huge profit on it so that we don't have to charge as much in other taxes."

Of course, once again that comes down hardest on those who are least able to pay, when in fact it should be a public service. It should be at cost to the people in a particular area. Not everybody can have a Cadillac, not everybody can live in a mansion, not everybody can go on six trips to Barbados per year, but we can provide basic services for people. That's the role of government. This government is diminishing that role.

Governments should not be intervening in all areas of our lives, but public services are useful in a certain number of areas and are something that makes us different from the United States. I know that if you're rich in the States that's a great place to be, because you can get even richer. But take a look and contrast our country with the United States in terms of the difference between the very rich and the very poor and you'll see that the very poor in the United States, people of modest means, do not do well at all.

I also noticed that the assets were supposed to be sold off to pay down the debt. I used to listen to the chamber of commerce and the Rotary Club and the taxpayers' federation and so on tell me, "We've got to pay down the debt," and now I don't hear that any more. Now: "Let's get those tax cuts in there. Let's put more money in the pockets of the richest people in the province so they can give more to the Conservative Party." It used to be that people said the debt is a problem. I agree; the debt's a problem. Let's pay down some of that debt and let's reinvest in good services.

Look, you've already cut your taxes in the first term. I don't think people are going to go back and take those taxes back now. That's in the past. I don't think you can live going back in the past that way. But look into the future. Your health care services are deteriorating. One thing we can be proud of in this province over the years—Conservative government, Liberal government, NDP government—was that we had a strong and vibrant public health care system. That is deteriorating, and it's most unfortunate. In our area, some of the hospitals are incurring deficits because of obligations entirely outside their control. How are they going to meet those deficits? They're going to cut services further. If you have anybody in the hospital, you darned well better have someone from the family there to look after them because, I'll tell you, it's not a pleasant experience. I think people want first-rate health care and are prepared to pay for it through their tax dollars, and not through privatization, which means the wealthiest people in the province can buy the best doctors and the best services and equipment available, while the rest of the population simply has to put up with what's left. Not that system, but a system where there's a public investment in health care so we can return to a condition where we have one of the finest health care systems in the world. When I talk to people other than real right wing Tories, who say, "Give me the

tax cuts," they say, "Please invest in good and necessary public services such as health care."

As I mentioned earlier, in St Catharines some specialists, such as the ophthalmologists, simply cannot serve all the people in the area and are now going to be capped and we're going to have people in this province going without the appropriate eye care they need.

I think you make a mistake in going further with them. You've done it already. You can take credit for that, if that's what you want to take credit for. But when you're looking into the future, particularly if there's a downturn in the economy, you're simply not going to have the revenue to deal with the many obligations you might have at that time.

Disadvantaged people in this province are really behind the eight ball. I listen to this government—and I'm a pretty forgiving person, in terms of what offences may have been committed in the past, and I'm not trying to be nasty. But when I hear people in this government get up from time to time—there was a question by the member for Stoney Creek today, when he got up in the House and wanted to bash students. He said student debts are frauds, to do with OSAP. Then I heard somebody else get up and lob a question about fraud to do with welfare, and the Premier suggested that somehow everybody on welfare has a cottage. Well, the only cottages I'm aware of are the Tories', who have wonderful big cottages. But I shouldn't even say that.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: Be that as it may, I heard members on the government side say: "Look, if somebody defrauds the Ontario Student Assistance Program, they should not get a cheque from the government of Ontario any more. And if somebody defrauds the welfare system, they should not get a cheque from the government any more." But apparently it's all right to defraud the income tax system in the province. If you commit income tax fraud, you still get a government cheque; in fact, you might even keep a seat in the cabinet. I think that's unfair. Either do it for everybody or nobody. I wouldn't even be talking about this in the House if it weren't for listening to people on the other side condemn people who are at the bottom of the ladder, while they ignore certain other offences which I think are equally deserving of some interest and consideration by the government. So disadvantaged people have not done exceedingly well.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: Well, your own figures show that it's costing you \$5 billion a year in lost revenue, because you implemented the tax cuts you already have. The Dominion Bond Rating Service—the member for Etobicoke North, who knows these things, knows that is no bastion of socialism; that is a hard-core, hard-nosed, right-wing organization which objectively evaluates debt and so on—said this government is forgoing approximately \$5 billion a year in revenue. That's why you have never balanced the budget. You bring in a budget balancing bill now, after you haven't balanced the budget for the past four years.

The credit rating, my friend from Pembroke would say, "We used to listen to the government get up in this House years ago and talk about the AAA credit rating in this province." Well, I haven't seen an AAA credit rating around this province in a long time. In fact the last time we had a AAA rating from all the rating agencies was when the Liberal government was in power. Now, with the Mike Harris government in power, it's well downgraded.

2030

Something interesting is happening to public services. The right wing does this to public services: They try to discredit them to such an extent and bring about a situation where there is a lack of confidence in public services that people accept a radical solution that they wouldn't normally accept. Let me give you an example. I don't know who took this poll today; it's probably rigged wording because most polls, one way or the other, tend to be answered in a certain way depending on the question asked. They've discredited the public health care system so much that now, when you say to some people, "Would you pay more independently out of your own pocket for health care?" in desperation some will say yes.

They should know there is another option. The government can invest tax dollars in a health care system. We need not have a system where the amount of money in someone's wallet, the amount of assets a person has, the value of those assets and the amount of money somebody has in a bank account shall determine what kind of health care he receives in this province. We never in this country want to get into that situation. If there's one thing I would stand for in this House, that I would fight for to the very end, it would be for a publicly funded health care system, and a high-quality health care system at that.

What you now see is people accepting privatization of certain services who never would have done so before. Discredit the public education system enough, for instance, and people will start to talk about privatization of universities. You know who will benefit from that. The wealthy kids will be able to go there, and other people won't be able to go there. Just today I listened to some university presidents applaud wildly at the prospect of getting more revenue when you deregulate tuition in certain areas. I can tell you what happens there. The wealthiest people will not be affected by that. They will still get into those schools of business, law, medicine or whatever it happens to be, and so will the brightest students who can win scholarships. But other good students out there simply will not have that access. We'll have a two-tier health care system and a two-tier education system if you people keep moving in the direction you're moving at the present time.

I look at this bill and say that what you're going to do by withdrawing more revenue from this government is diminish services more. There was a bad accident today on the highway, most unfortunate. I'm sure every one of us in this Assembly felt very badly hearing the story of the accident on Highway 417. If you cut back services on those highways—and some of the rural members par-

ticularly know this—if you don't get the service we used to get from the Ministry of Transportation in terms of cleaning, salting and sanding those highways, you have an awfully dangerous situation. The main roads tend to be looked after.

Don't go back to that system. The auditor, in his report and in his interview on Focus Ontario, said, "Don't just do privatization because ideologically it's something the government should stand for. Do as the Davis administration used to do. Yes, they were Conservative; yes, they were cautious in many ways. But they were very practical, and they didn't implement that if they didn't have to.

I notice today that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation approves of the bill brought forward by Dalton McGuinty, which would control government advertising, because this government spent \$100 million on government advertising. The issue wasn't how much they spent. The issue was essentially the nature of it, and it was purely partisan political advertising for the political party that already had money flowing out of its war chest.

Those are a few comments I'd like to offer on this bill.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): The bill before us is An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario—quite a mouthful. I spoke earlier today about the irony I found in some of the titles, but I have grasped that repetition is not a cardinal sin in this House. I suggest it could also be phrased a bill to enact more health cuts, more education cuts, more user fees. I think that would be truth in advertising.

Each evening I like to sit at the computer on the Internet and read newspapers, predominantly from the US but from a variety of areas. It gives me a chance to get a little different perspective on what's going on in the world. What I have noticed in the US is stories repeatedly referring to shortages of employees and shortages of workers, and a substantial number of ads looking for employees for good jobs. I contrast that with the ads in Ontario, where far too many are for minimum-wage jobs.

I challenge this government to produce for me the proof of all these jobs they've created. I would like to know how many hours a week each of these jobs are, and I'd like to know what the average pay for them is, because I believe, based on my experience, talking to people in my riding, that these are part-time jobs and, by and large, minimum-wage jobs.

I think it's wonderful that the economy in Ontario is doing as well as it is, but I would remind everyone that we're really talking the greater Toronto area when we're talking about how well the economy is doing.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the US. The exports are the engine driving this province. It has been mentioned previously that 49% of our gross national product is exports, predominantly to the US. They're doing well, but strangely they haven't had tax cuts. They've kept the taxes up and they've kept the services up, and the economy is doing well. Here in Ontario, we have had tax cuts and we're saying our economy is doing well, but in fact

it's tied to the US. I think we can produce the evidence that says that the healthy American economy, with no tax cuts, is what's driving us well.

However, let's think about that argument about tax cuts. We've seen a series of them over the last four years. I like tax cuts, but I also know, from talking to people, what the real human impact is of these cuts. I've talked to people waiting to get into hospitals. I've talked to people who have sat on stretchers for days in the hospital. I've talked to students who can't afford post-secondary education. I've talked to farmers who have seen their ag offices close all over their areas. I've talked to small business that hasn't seen the benefits from this government.

The question that needs to be asked is, if tax cuts are the right approach, when is enough? When is the right amount of cut to the appropriate goal? When do we reach the target? I think about Ottawa, and I am somewhat dismayed in this House at how much time, particularly from the other side, is devoted to telling us what's wrong historically and what's wrong with the government in Ottawa, rather than looking to the future. I don't think any of us got elected to debate what happened four and eight years ago. We got elected to debate and decide what will happen four years from now.

The government in Ottawa has a surplus. They haven't cut taxes and they have a surplus, but that's wrong. Somehow it's wrong because they have surplus, and yet here in Ontario we've cut taxes and we have an increasing deficit, but that's right. It's OK to have an increasing deficit. I don't think that's right. I can understand at times why the city of Toronto is idly considering separating from Ontario. They don't want to separate from Canada, but they want to separate from Ontario. They realize that the prosperity that has come to Ontario has come to them because of the auto trade.

We're making the cuts, the debt has continued to rise, and we call them savings. We have still quite a number of children at home. We could reduce the amount of money we're spending on groceries for them. That would be wrong, but we could reduce it. Not only could we reduce the money we're spending on groceries, we could call it savings. We have found savings by not buying groceries this week. That's morally wrong. It's not the right cut. There are hungry people in this province far out of proportion to four years ago.

I have seen with my own eyes in the school systems in my riding schools that never, ever had to feed children breakfast. Now I see over 30 schools in my public board in Prince Edward-Hastings providing breakfast clubs for students who are coming to school hungry. That should tear at everyone's conscience, that we have, in our wonderful Ontario, hungry children, not coming early for a social aspect, coming early so they can have breakfast and realizing that in many cases they won't have lunch. But at least the community, at no cost to the taxpayer, has got one meal into them.

2040

We heard earlier from the member for Halton how the US unemployment system works, where it encourages

people to move all over the country to get a job. When I talked to people in Prince Edward-Hastings, what they said to me was that they wanted their children to be able to graduate from school and find employment in our Ontario, in their community. We can look at the bottom line for dollars, but we also need to look at the human aspect of our province.

The wonderful relationship that existed for centuries in Ontario of grandparents, parents and grandchildren being together as a family unit is being torn apart by our economy. The wonderful supports that existed for families to support not just their children but to provide support to their parents have changed when our young people have to go not necessarily to other parts of Ontario but perhaps to other parts of Canada or to the US. Quality of life needs to be a measurable factor in there as much as providing a tax cut to the extremely well to do.

It is ironic, in a sense, that as we're losing the family support system, as our family units move all over the area, the government itself has cut so many of the institutional supports. Seniors are having difficulty accessing home care or are limited in the number of hours of home care, with no relative near to make up that difference and to make up that support.

I watch some of the decisions that are going to be enacted by this bill with the Ontario Realty Corp, and I look at the things we're selling as a government in Ontario. There is an expression we have around home that says you will never buy something as cheap as something you already own, and we're going to sell property to pay the grocery bill. It's not going to go to paying down the debt. We're taking property we own and we will sell it to pay the day-to-day bills. That works as long as we have things to sell, but it will force the province to a point where we're selling things that we really value.

I watch industry take a building and sell it and lease it back. Generally that's an omen that there's a major cash-flow problem there. I believe when we're selling Highway 407 to corporations, some of which operate from outside of our country and we're shipping money out, we are selling our assets to pay the day-to-day grocery bill, and it will catch up to us.

I can understand the member for Wentworth-Burlington's concern about Ontario having the highest property taxes. I think the actions of this government over the last four years have done much to cause that. The balanced budget bill that we looked at earlier today has the potential to cause even more downloading on to the municipalities, and they can't fight back. They're vulnerable, they're an easy target and they have no weapons to fight back. When a service is dumped on them, they have no choice but to accept it. To me, it becomes a moral issue when we do that without consultation and simply force them to pick up this extra cost.

It's easy to blame a lot of other targets for that, and we can probably drag in the blame on the federal government for that. That seems to be the standard defence here in the House; or we blame municipalities for putting their taxes up. But when you get outside the greater Toronto

area and you ask municipalities to have the quality of their ambulance service tied to the value of their property, tied to the local economy, as factories close, the business taxes go down and there is a net loss to that area. So whether you get an ambulance or not will depend on how well industry is doing in your area. That has to be wrong.

We've seen so many promises made that have not been kept. There was a commitment to not close hospitals, and maybe there are some hospitals that should have been closed, but there was a commitment to not close hospitals.

There was a commitment to have smaller classes. We saw a lot of the public's dollars go out to say that the classes will be smaller, they will average 25 or they will average 22.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order.

Mr Parsons: But before these wonderful changes came into line, classes in grades 1 and 2 were capped at 20.

The Deputy Speaker: There's too much interjecting. I want to be able to hear the speaker. If you have something you'd like to say, if you'd just leave the room and say it and then come back in. We would like to have you here, but we need to have the attention that he deserves given to the speaker. I recognize the member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll not warn the member from Grey-Bruce again.

Mr Parsons: Before the education reforms came into place, grades 1 and 2 were capped at 20—not 20 average, but 20. Because of the wonderful changes, now it's an average of 25. The very vital early years, grade 1 and grade 2, have in fact seen increases.

But the issue that the government side doesn't want to talk about is debt. Debt is the issue. The borrowing that has taken place by this government has been done to provide services for all of us of my age group, and I know my children will be forced to pay back that debt. I enjoy the advantages; they're stuck with the debt. That is morally wrong. The issue for us to address is: We've had the services; we pay back the debt. I would prefer to hear a lot more emphasis on debt rather than tax cuts.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Crozier: I'm pleased to add to the comments of my colleagues from Scarborough-Agincourt, St Catharines and Prince Edward-Hastings on the debate on Bill 14, a budget bill that has some 175 pages. I think those viewers who may be watching this evening would be interested to know that rather than just a bill that says how much money we're going to take in and how much we're going to spend, this bill actually amends 22 acts. I really wonder what effect some of the amendments are going to have on government spending.

I've heard a lot from the government tonight about what is in this bill, how great the bill is, what it's going to do, what it's going to mean to all of us in a positive way.

I'd like to tell you tonight a couple of things that aren't in this bill, and that's why I won't be able to support it.

I'm pleased to be able to speak to the bill on its first night of debate because I'm willing to suggest that debate will be limited on this bill before we're finished, as the government has done on so many other bills. In a nice way they call that limiting debate, whereas some may call it closure. Some may call it an instance where the government doesn't want to hear any more about the downside of their bill. Anyway, I'm pleased to speak on this bill tonight.

Something I don't think we'll find in the budget, and this budget bill supports that, is any funding for the Highway 3 bypass, where there's been carnage over the last couple of years. I doubt that there is anything in this budget bill or in the budget that will provide for the four-laning of the bypass.

I'm not even sure there's money in this bill and the budget for any improvements in the highway bypass. As a matter of fact, our folks back home might wonder when the improvements that are being worked on now will ever get done. I'm shocked that it seems we're going to be well into the new millennium before that highway extension is finished. The contract was let 365 days ago. The work started in earnest 187 days ago and the contractor has worked on it for 99 days. It will be no wonder that we'll not find anything new in this for the Highway 3 bypass, because I'm not quite sure when it's ever going to be finished. I kidded some local Conservatives after the election in the ridings of Essex South and Chatham-Kent Essex, and Windsor for that matter, that the bypass just might still be a gravel road had they known how it was going to turn out in our end of the country.

2050

I don't think there's anything in this budget bill of significance that's going to help with the carnage there has been on Highway 401 through the Chatham-Kent and the Essex-Windsor areas. I'm not confident that there's anything in this bill that's going to improve the safety of that highway; that is, perhaps, going to three-lane that highway the way it should be; that's going to provide a centre barrier the way it should be. I certainly hope there is something in the budget bill, but then again, we are two thirds or perhaps a little more than 50% of the way through the year and the budget is being presented now. We're going to have another budget next spring, so I can always hope there might be something in next spring's budget.

I'm concerned, as is the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board and the Greater Essex County District School Board, that there isn't anything in here for special education funding, in particular the intensive support amount, more commonly known as ISA grants.

The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board even now is going to be about \$2 million short. The Greater Essex County District School Board is going to be about \$2.5 million short. I don't think there's anything in this budget bill that's going to alleviate the needs of

the special education students in the greater Windsor-Essex county area.

It says in the letter from the Greater Essex County District School Board, "We received 100% approval at the time that the reviews were made and the needs of special education students were looked at earlier this year." Windsor-Essex has a high incidence of children with special needs and they've provided charts to that effect.

It also says, "The full implementation of the Essex County District School Board special education plan is underway in spite of incredible challenges and shortfall in funding for special education." I don't see any hope in this budget bill for the hope that those parents and children have. That's why I won't have any problem with voting against the bill.

The Windsor-Essex Catholic School Board says they are "greatly concerned over the fact that funding for students with special needs has been frozen at the 1998-99 level." They go on to say, and I don't think there's anything in this budget bill or the supporting budget papers, that there's no funding for students who register in the board from section 19 schools—those are institutional or correctional schools—from preschool, or in fact from other countries. The intensive support amount dollars do not cover the salary and benefits of an educational assistant. Transportation is not covered.

In fact, the administration to prepare the ISA funding has been overlooked by the ministry. I'm told that the shortfall in Ontario for special education funding, and in particular the ISA grants, is going to be about \$100 million. You know what's kind of coincidental? We're told that it costs \$100 million in paperwork to put in to the government to be assessed as to whether these children need the kind of care that's being proposed—\$100 million dollars on paperwork. I think when we get to the red tape bill, that may be one of the places where we can do some good.

I don't see that there's going to be anything in this budget, any hope at all, for parents and children when it comes to special education when boards have yet to receive the information from the review team. When the review team looked over this \$100 million worth of forms, they still haven't heard from them whether they're actually going to get the funding that they initially asked for.

There's no money in this budget when it comes to special education kids for field trips, for co-op, for work programs, work experience, nothing for transportation. That translates into little hope in this great budget bill that we've been debating tonight.

There are funding cuts to the maintenance budget that prohibit renovations for students with physical challenges. As I've said, the administrative costs alone aren't considered in the budget. Funding doesn't cover the entire costs of the people who are going to work in the program, for goodness sakes, and parents must pay for medical reports and records that are submitted in support of their child's needs.

Then what happens, as we know with our health care system the way it is today, is that it takes some time to get those medical reports. It takes some time to get appointments because of a lack of doctors. You know what happens? If they're delayed because of the medical system, they don't get the medical report in time and, oops, no funding. That child is just left out in nowhere land, and it's no fault of theirs and it's no fault of the parents.

I don't have much faith or hope in this budget, because I don't see any funding in it for newly identified students or for students' changing needs. What if their assessment needs change? What if their needs grow greater during the year? There is nothing in this budget for that.

I hear a lot about jobs. I hear a lot about tax cuts. How's a tax cut going to help a young child in school today when they can't get the educational support, they can't get the intensive support they need? That just causes greater concern in the classroom itself. If the student is fortunate enough to get in there, if the student is fortunate enough to have some care but not what the student needs, then it disrupts the rest of the class. It's not the student's fault, it's not the teacher's fault, it's not the parents' fault, it's not the board's fault; it's the Minister of Education's fault. They won't provide the funding. I don't see anything in this budget that's going to give them any hope for that.

There isn't anything in here for students who need educational assistance for safety reasons alone. Those students who may not quite qualify but who have behavioural or learning deficits, there's no hope in this budget for them.

I received a letter today that would just make you wonder what's happening in our education system. This letter reads, in part—and the Minister of Education will either have received the letter or will soon—"The current dilemma is that far more children qualified for funding than the ministry anticipated and consequently many children are going without support."

It goes on to point out that this constituent's child does have the support of an educational assistant, but there's a child in the classroom who doesn't, and the educational assistant for one child has to take time to go and assist another, and that simply compounds the problem.

I'm going to conclude by just suggesting that the government members stand and talk about all the good things in the budget that they see, all the hope in the budget that they see, but I do wish they would take some time—

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: You know, member from Kitchener, a job doesn't mean a damn thing to a child in a classroom who doesn't have the assistance they need.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Mazzilli: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you please ask the member to withdraw his comment. "Damn" is not proper language for the House, in my view, and I leave it in your hands.

The Deputy Speaker: If the member from Essex wishes to make a correction on that, I'll give him the

opportunity; if not, I would like to recognize the member from Timmins-James Bay.

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Mr Bisson: The member from Essex raised at the very end a point that is interesting, which is that the government is always very good at pointing out what it does and tries to take full credit for it but is very—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Must be my magnetic personality.

The Deputy Speaker: That's enough. Order. I was at a reception a little earlier tonight—

Interjection: Tell me more.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm going to—and a member from the riding of Cochrane, and this fellow raises sheep, was suggesting that some of us in here need correcting. I'm suggesting to you that it's not in our rules to interject. Now, if you would take that little story, mull it over for just a minute, if you like, and if you don't, you can either leave now or when I name you.

In the meantime, the member for Timmins-James Bay has one minute and 48 seconds for his comments and questions if he'd like to take it.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, I don't think I can follow that act.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Bruce-Grey.

Mr Murdoch: Tonight, for the last 40 to 50 or 60 minutes, we've listened to the Liberals go on and on about how doomsday is here. You would think we were back in the 18th century the way they're going on and on about nothing being right, everything is so bad. There are some good speakers over there, but they have no idea how to help things out. All they can do is complain and complain and complain more. Everything is bad.

They talk about the tax credits. Well, the economy is booming right now. That certainly helped, but they can't seem to understand that. The member from Prince Edward county, you'd think the end of the world was coming. He went on about how bad it is. Maybe it was when you lost the election, maybe it was bad that night, but fellas, the election is over. Let's get on with it. Let's try to work some of these things out.

You seem to go on, it's doom and gloom, nothing is working out. You know, the education system has been turned around; it's starting to work well. The health system had to be turned around after we had 10 lost years with you guys looking after the ship. Then you got married to the NDP. When you did that, things went pretty bad. We had the bedwetters' accord between the two of you over there, and look what happened. All you could do was spend money, and every time you do happen to come up with an idea, it's spending more money. Whose money are you spending? The taxpayers' money is whose money you're spending. You would think that you would come up with something that would actually help things out rather than just spending more money and putting us in debt.

You even have the gall to say that you want to curb the debt and things like that, but you don't care about the

debt. All you care about over there is saying: "Let's spend more money. Let's just keep everybody happy out there. Nothing else can happen. We just want to go on." Remember, folks, the people out there told you after the last election what they thought of your ways.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to suggest that, whether we use French or English, which are both allowed in this House, they both have a lot of words. I don't think we're literary bankrupts here, that we have to use words that some people might find offensive. Let me suggest that you explore those words which will allow you to express yourself without offending somebody else.

I would like to recognize the member from Brant.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I want to make a couple of comments about my friend from Essex, to supplement some of those at first hand. Unfortunately, I had to experience some of the problems that were created by the ISA grant changes. Just to make sure that people understand what we had to go through, we probably ended up having to use staff time that was insurmountable in terms of making that up for the classroom teacher, for the specialised teacher, for the secretary's time, for the principal's time and for the students' time and the parents' time. Parents were often sent off on wonderful journeys to try to find all this support material.

The difference between the previous year and this present year that we had to go through was the fact that the bar was raised in terms of the qualifiers. The descriptors of what those children had to be in order to get that assistance were raised and changed to a point where very few of those students who actually needed help got it because those descriptors were changed. The bar was raised so high that those students who got that assistance the previous year got dropped off. That meant those students got no assistance whatsoever back into that classroom, so that classroom teacher had to be very much more attentive to those individual students, taking away time from the regular stream of the student.

To say that the educational system was improved by more money into the ISA grants is not true in terms of the amount of money that actually got spent to SEPPA; it got changed over to the SEPPA grant. In other words the freeze that got applied—and the minister implied very clearly that the freeze was asked for by all of the boards across the province. If she was listening carefully to what the superintendents across the province were saying, they weren't saying, "Freeze us," they were saying, "We want to get a handle on this ISA grant because you've changed the definitions and we've got to have more students covered."

Is it a matter of spending more money? Absolutely it's a matter of spending more money. If you ask the people of the province of Ontario who have special-needs children, they will pay more in taxes for their children to get that help.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): When you're standing at the gates of General Motors and talking with the people who come off the line—we were talking about

Bill 14. The position of the third party certainly brought a lot of concern to the individuals on the line about the direction they were heading in. One of the biggest questions when the tax cuts first came round was, "How much did it mean to me?" The calls and the people on the line, it was all the same: They were concerned and they were very supportive of the changes that were coming through.

It'd like to make a couple of comments on the various members who spoke tonight; first of all, the member from Essex. He spoke about the changes that came in and brought the entire debate down to dollars and cents. It appeared, as the member from Grey-Bruce mentioned, that the only concern was that we needed more funds and that the only way you can resolve the situation is by giving it more money. That's how we got into that problem in the first place.

The member from Prince Edward-Hastings mentioned that the deficit was increasing. Quite the contrary. The deficit has gone from \$11.3 billion to \$2.6 billion. I just needed to make that very clear.

Not only that, there were a couple of members who spoke—the member from St Catharines spoke about not everyone owning a Cadillac or having the ability to do six trips to Barbados or owning season tickets to the Sabres. But there are a lot of opportunities people have out there that they can use this tax credit for.

In the remaining time I have I'd like to point out something that both the member from St Catharines and the member from Scarborough-Agincourt brought forward. In this, the top of the page reads as follows: "Our Proposal for Change ... Eliminate Overlap and Duplication." In regard to ambulance services, which was mentioned on a couple of occasions this evening, "We believe that merging ambulance with our local fire services will provide our communities with a faster, more effective emergency care system." What does that say? That says they're asking for the ambulance service.

I might add that the individuals who put their name to this were Frank Faubert, Doug Holyday, Frances Nunziata, Barbara Hall, and of course Mel Lastman.

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The Deputy Speaker: The member for Essex has two minutes to respond.

Mr Crozier: Obviously my excitement disturbed somebody over there. The member from London-Fanshawe seemed to be concerned about the language I finished with. What he didn't seem to be concerned about was the language I used for the 12 or 14 minutes I was talking, and that was special education needs. Yes, if it does mean more funding, I guess that's the answer.

The Ministry of Education set the priorities. They set the level at which these students are going to be reviewed. The parents don't, the teachers don't, the children don't. I am just saying that if there are children out there in our schools in need, you don't let them down.

We have no idea what the stress is at home in a family which has children with special needs, let alone what the stress is when they send them off to school. We don't know what the stress is in a family at home when there's

no funding for them at school. There are some children who are not in school today because they don't have the assistance they need. You can't send them to school. It's dangerous for them to be at school. They need that kind of help and, yes, it costs money. That's what this whole bill is about—money. It's whether you want to give a tax cut to the rich or you want to help out those whom you've assessed have a need. That's what it's all about. It's money and it's need and, in some cases, it's greed.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Bisson: I get an opportunity to comment on this act in regard to a number of changes the government is making in regard to this bill.

I've got to come to one point in all of this. One of the beauties of a bill such as this is it gives us an opportunity to comment on a number of initiatives put forward by the government and I want to start, in no particular order, with one that I think is rather interesting. You remember that back in the last Parliament, Mike Harris, when he moved forward with his privatization initiatives, said that all the money that is utilized and is made by the provincial government when it comes to the privatization of assets would basically go to paying down the debt. In fact back then there was a quote by Mike Harris, who said in the Common Sense Revolution: "The money we make from such asset sales will not go into the government accounts. Every penny will go directly to pay down the \$80-billion provincial debt."

Never mind that the debt has moved from \$80 billion to over \$126 billion since this government took office. What I find rather interesting is the pledge Mike Harris made. The pledge he made was quite concrete. It said, "Every penny"—that's every sou, as we say in French—"will go directly to pay down the \$80-billion provincial debt." If you take a look at the legislation that's being put forward by the government, there's a section under the Financial Administration Act that says Mike Harris is breaking his promise to the people of Ontario and he's—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: You got me; not bad.

Mike Harris is saying to the people of Ontario—actually, you didn't get me; I did have it out. Good thing my colleagues across the way did that. I didn't realize my—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Thank you. Just for that, I should get off this topic.

As I said, in the Common Sense Revolution Mike Harris said, "Every penny will go directly to pay down the \$80-billion provincial debt." If you take a look at the amendments made to the Financial Administration Act, it says a number of things and, under one section of the act, that the dollars that are got by the provincial government by selling assets such as the 407, which we sold last spring, or any other provincial asset the provincial government owns, the costs of creating or preserving this asset could be deemed as money that the provincial government would use and put into general revenue.

Let's just take that one step and let's, for example, say the government was to sell, oh, I don't know, a provincial

government building such as the Roberta Bondar Building in Sault Ste Marie. You would know, Mr Speaker, that in the fine community of Sault Ste Marie it is rumoured fairly directly that the government wants to look at the possibility of privatizing that provincial government building, the Roberta Bondar Building.

Let's say the government paid, and I'm just going to use a figure, \$20 million to build that building. The provincial government by way of that clause can say, "It cost us \$20 million to build it, so if we sell it we want our \$20 million back, and if the sale of the building is now \$30 million because of inflation, and we spent a whole bunch of money to get the building up to snuff and to do the kind of renovations we did to it over the years, therefore, \$30-million sale; back to general revenue, \$30 million." I see a pretty wide loophole in this legislation.

If you take a look, there's another section that says the amount allocated by cabinet for projects that are designated as priority projects. That means basically anything under general revenue. It means that if the provincial government decides, as a priority, that they want to spend money, let's say, on government advertising—we know that prior to the last election, the provincial government spent millions and millions of dollars on government advertising—the government could say: "Rather than trying to show the advertising as spending under general government revenue in the first year, we can sell off assets and use the money from the assets sales in order to pay for our advertising. Wouldn't we look clever," would say the Conservative government, because they wouldn't have to account for it in that fiscal year under general revenue. They'd be able to show it in the off year under the sale of provincial assets.

The legislation is laughable when it comes to the promise that was made by the Harris government that said they were going to spend every dollar they raised by way of privatization to paying down the debt. The reality is, the legislation gives the provincial government the ability to do absolutely anything it deems.

I'm going to come back to a point I made earlier this afternoon. You've got to remember and you've got to put into context what this government has done. We find ourselves now in the budget year 1999-2000, where the provincial government is still running a fairly significant deficit. You ought to say to yourself, "Why is it, if we're in a so-called economic rebound, that the provincial government of Ontario still has a large deficit in this sixth year in which the economy has actually been climbing?" It started climbing about 1993-94.

You have to say it's clearly because of one decision. The Harris government decided early on that it was going to give a tax cut. For most people in the general public, a tax cut is probably a good idea. If you come to most people on the street and you say, "Do you want a tax cut?" "By Lord, yeah, I want a tax cut. Give it to me. I'll take all the money I can back off my paycheque so I can go out and do whatever I've got to do."

But there's been a cost associated to that tax cut. The cost has come in a couple of ways. First of all, when it

comes to the deficit, the provincial government has had to borrow each and every year in order to pay for the tax cut. Every dollar that the government has given back by way of tax cuts to the general population and the business sector of Ontario, the government has had to go out and borrow in order to finance that tax cut. If the government hadn't done that, we would have been in a position about three years ago of being able to balance the budget.

It's interesting to note that Ontario is one of the last provincial jurisdictions that haven't balanced their yearly budgets. Saskatchewan was the first to do so. Most every other province, other than the province of Quebec, which is scheduled to do it this year, has balanced its budget, other than Ontario. I find it somewhat ironic that a government which ran on the issue of balancing the budget find themselves now in their second term, in the sixth year of office, not having balanced the budget.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Sixth year?

Mr Bisson: Or five years, 1995 to year 2000; you're about to go into your sixth year. The point is that the government has yet to balance the budget. I think it comes back down to a very simple reason. The government unwisely chose to try to deal with expenditure control at the same time it was trying to give a tax cut.

If it had been my choice as a New Democrat, I would rather have seen the government move the way that we were trying to move, which is trying to deal with individual expenses of ministries and programs, and once you find yourself in the position of having balanced your budget and having a surplus, then trying to deal with the tax cut. In fact, that's what the NDP government in Saskatchewan did. I would suspect that's what the NDP government in Manitoba will do once it balances the budget that they were left with by the Filmon government that has left them, as it turns out, with a deficit of some \$200 million or \$300 million, even though the Filmon government said they had balanced the budget.

The other thing that happened in regard to the tax cut that we've had to pay for is that the government has had to go out and try to find ways of making up the money they have had to find in order to finance their tax scheme. I see the Minister of Education is here tonight, along with a number of other ministers. It's not all her doing, because there were other ministers of education before her, but we have seen programs in education, health care, social services and others that, quite frankly, have been severely reduced by way of funding formulas and various other items that they've had to do in order to try to find ways of paying for the tax cut.

I come back to what was said earlier by a few other members in the House. This is fine and dandy when we look at the tax cut, but go talk to the parents or the children who are in need of special-needs education in this province and ask them if the tax cut was really worth it. I was in Moosonee not more than two weeks ago meeting with first parents and then teachers of children who are in special-needs education in Moosonee, as I did in other communities across my riding. It has always been a

problem. The reality is that it would be wrong for me to stand as a member of the opposition, a member of the New Democratic Party, to say that at some time in the past in Ontario, special-needs education was perfect, because it never was. Each government, over the years, tried to do more and more to respond to a very severe need to provide educational services and supports for kids with special needs in our school system. But there was always a hope, up until a few years ago, that governments were moving in the right direction, that governments were trying to find solutions to very tough situations and problems within the school system.

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Over the last five years, I would argue, there has basically been no hope. Things have actually gone in the opposite direction. The funding formula has put us in a position where we have less and less money to deal with special-needs education.

I am glad the Minister of Education is here tonight, because I want to say to her that when I met with the people from Moosonee and Moose Factory, it's quite appalling what is happening to education on the James Bay coast in provincial schools, aside from what's happened at schools like Delores Echum in Moose Factory, which is a federally funded school. But in public schools like Bishop Belleau school and others, basically we're seeing 60% of kids going without the basic needs of education because of what's going on in those communities, and the funding is not responding to the actual need. They are saying there are a number of issues. I'm told by parents and by people in the education system that you have a number of kids who are basically special-needs, at a higher percentage than you would see in other communities on the James Bay coast, who are not receiving the kind of special-needs education they need to get.

There are also a whole lot of cultural and language issues that have to be overcome. The first language in those communities is not English or French; it's Cree. By the time they hit the school system, they are having to try to deal with learning a second language, which is English, and their language skills are normally two to three years behind what they are for other children in communities such as Timmins or Toronto or Windsor or whatever. So teachers in there trying to teach according to the new curriculum in grade 1, grade 2, grade 3, grade 4 etc are really at a loss to deal with what these kids have to deal with because of the language barriers they have to overcome, not to talk about the social issues that go on as well. All of this is exacerbated by the issue that's happening with the new funding formulas within the province.

So I say to the Minister of Education, we can stand up here and try to say that we're doing a good job and everything is fine in Ontario, but I would invite the Minister of Education to come to communities such as Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Moosonee, Moose Factory, and to go talk to those kids. You'll find that, if anything, we have to redouble our efforts in order to deal with providing the kinds of supports and the kinds

of funding—and I say the word “funding” deliberately—that are needed in order to meet the needs of those kids.

I look around communities, and I look at the issues of housing. L'autre jour, samedi, j'étais dans la communauté d'Opasatika, où j'ai eu la chance de rencontrer le trésorier-greffier de cette communauté, M. Dorval. J'ai eu aussi l'occasion de rencontrer d'autres citoyens de la communauté qui sont, comme on le dit, de l'âge d'or et qui disent, « Écoutez, nous aimerions être capables de bâtir des appartements à but non lucratif dans notre communauté. » Ils sont d'un âge où ils ne veulent pas rester dans leur résidence. Ils ont des maisons de trois ou quatre chambres à coucher. Ils disent, « J'aimerais être capable d'aller dans un appartement », comme le monde dans les communautés de Toronto ou Timmins ou Kapuskasing ou autres. Mais dans la communauté d'Opasatika, ils n'ont pas ce choix, parce qu'il n'y a pas de bâtiments à but non lucratif qui sont construits jusqu'à date.

La communauté, avec ses citoyens, essaie de trouver une résolution à ce problème en regardant au gouvernement provincial, parce qu'on sait que le gouvernement fédéral a transféré, le 17 novembre de cette année, toutes les responsabilités pour le logement aux provinces. Il tombe sur les épaules de la province de répondre à tous les besoins de logement dans la province. Le gouvernement fédéral a abandonné cette responsabilité.

On voit dans la communauté d'Opasatika, juste au nord de Kapuskasing, que cette communauté aimerait être capable de construire quelques logements afin de répondre aux besoins des citoyens de cette communauté qui sont dans leur retraite et qui cherchent à se trouver un appartement, pas une grande maison, pour entretenir leurs besoins, une place à vivre dans les années à venir. Mais cette communauté n'a pas la capacité pour aller rechercher l'argent nécessaire, parce que le gouvernement provincial de Mike Harris a dit, en 1995, qu'ils n'étaient pas pour financer, d'aucune manière, les maisons à but non lucratif ou les appartements à but non lucratif dans les communautés de l'Ontario. Or, on regarde cette communauté, et ses citoyens n'ont pas l'habileté de faire comme d'autres personnes dans d'autres communautés partout en Ontario, ce que tout le monde prend pour acquis.

On se demande pourquoi. C'est très simple. Le gouvernement de Mike Harris a dit, « On va donner une réduction d'impôt. » Ben, oui, c'est bon. Mais on a besoin de payer un coût. Dans ce cas le coût, pour le monde d'Opasatika, c'est qu'il est bien difficile d'aller rechercher l'argent nécessaire pour mettre en place les appartements à but non lucratif.

I look up on the James Bay coast; it's the same story. I look at communities like Kashechewan. I would challenge any member of this assembly—the leader of my party, Mr Howard Hampton, represents a riding similar to mine in regard to the number of native communities

within our ridings—to go up and take a look at the conditions in most of the aboriginal communities in the northern part of the province. Mr Speaker, I know if you came you would be enraged with what the federal government has not done in those communities.

We take for granted we've got our nice houses, we've got our white picket fences, our children each have their own bedrooms, cable television in every room, and in some cases, where the families can afford it, private telephones for their kids. Go to Kashechewan, go to Attawapiskat or Peawanuck and find out if those kinds of conditions exist. You're lucky to get a telephone in some of those communities, because of the poor telephone service; hydro rates are out of this world because it's diesel-generated; there's no power grid up there; there's no transportation per se; there's no railway; there's no road. There's no way to get anything in, other than flying it in, in the winter, or bringing it in by barge during the summer, so the cost of everything is much more expensive.

More important, the very basic needs—on the issue of housing, the federal government dropped the ball 30 years ago. And you know what? They didn't even know they lost the ball, because they never went up there to take a look at what's going on. If you go into communities like Kashechewan and take a look at the condition of housing, you have literally 10, 15, 20 people living in one building. Never mind children having one room to themselves so they can retreat and do their studies and find their own space and develop as young individuals. You have two and three families having to live in the same house, not by choice, but because there is no other place for them to live, and the federal government has allowed this to happen for a number of years.

They're looking at their provincial government and saying, “What about us?” What about looking at housing programs in response to the needs of the aboriginal people living on the James Bay coast, or the people in northwestern Ontario? I think there's an opportunity for the provincial government to do something. We know the federal government has transferred housing over to the province, and if we are going to do anything when it comes to housing—we need to start taking a look at what's happened up on the James Bay coast and what's happened in other native communities across the province. We need to wake up at one point, because if it is woken up for us, I'll tell you, it's not going to be a pretty sight.

Mr Speaker, I notice it's almost 9:30 of the clock. The rest of this time will be shared by the finance critic for our party, Mr Dave Christopherson, the next time the House comes back into session.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2128.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 23 November 1999

Mardi 23 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 23 novembre 1999

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SAULT COLLEGE

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I call on the Minister of Colleges and Universities and Premier Harris to directly intervene to prevent the impending layoff and forced retirement of over 35 employees at Sault College. This action is a direct result of the Harris attack on colleges and universities. It has forced administration to cut the services and programs that it has offered, like eliminating the Wawa and Elliot Lake campuses of the college.

Minister, this is unacceptable, as is last week's proposal to cut another \$160 million in funding from our colleges and universities. The results of these cuts threaten to undermine the future of this province. These days, colleges are finding they can no longer fund their existing programs adequately and are being forced to cut programs offered. The result is especially devastating in northern Ontario.

Three weeks ago my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and I met with students, faculty and administration at Sault College. Minister, the message they want you to hear is that your government has hurt this college and made it more difficult for the students to complete their education. Not only has your government made access more difficult through astronomical tuition hikes, but now these institutions are being forced to cut programs and staff, undermining the education of our students.

Minister, Premier, take action to save and augment the programs at Sault College and do the right thing for once. We all know that once these cuts are made there is little chance of having them reversed. Restore the funding; restore the money you've taken from the children of Ontario.

CHARLES WHITE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate one of my constituents, Mr Charles White. Mr White was recently named by the Toronto Sun as one of the top 10 teachers of the year. Mr White is a secondary school teacher of instrumental

music, vocal music and guidance at Port Perry High School.

Charles White is a very special teacher, following in his parents' footsteps since 1970 as a teacher in Port Perry. Mr White was one of the recipients of this year's Toronto Sun Teacher of the Year Award. The award was established to promote public awareness of teaching excellence and to encourage parents, students and teachers to focus on the positives of education.

I'd like to congratulate Mr White on being chosen for this important award. There were more than 1,500 nominations from across Ontario. A former principal of Port Perry High School, Mr Morrison, has said the following about Mr White:

"Charles White creates positive, self-confident students while refining raw musical talent into professional quality performances. Once Charles has touched you, you will be motivated to reach for the stars. He is the kind of teacher you will tell your children and grandchildren about—he is the essence of outstanding teaching."

I applaud Mr White and all the dedicated teachers in the riding of Durham. Teachers teach by example, and professionalism and excellence are the kinds of methodologies they use.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I rise today to talk about the shortage of doctors in the province, especially in eastern Ontario. There have been numerous studies that clearly show that the people of eastern Ontario are underserved, and the province knows that.

In my riding, the Ministry of Health figures indicate that the city of Cornwall and area should have 41 practitioners. They only have 30 at the present time, a figure that is 25% below the normal average.

A few years ago, the city had 33 family physicians, which means that there has been a 10% decrease in the past few years. The result is that people are not getting the service they need, and something has to be done about it.

The Cornwall Academy of Medicine, the Cornwall General Hospital, the hospitaliers of St Joseph's and the local municipalities have put together a plan. They are attempting to recruit new physicians, and they have established a task force. I salute them for their efforts. The province has to do its share.

In our area, general practitioners, orthopaedic surgeons and obstetricians are in short supply. Both in the short term and in the long term we have to have a plan, and the government has to take action now and give eastern Ontario the service that it needs.

1340

LAURIE PALLETT

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I rise today to pay tribute to Laurie Pallett, who is with us in the members' gallery, as she moves on from her position as executive director of the Mississauga Arts Council. Under Laurie's leadership currently more than 100 performing groups, 45 visual arts groups, 22 ethnic groups and several literary and multicultural groups are organized under the Mississauga Arts Council. She is a true cheerleader for local artists. Laurie has inspired hundreds of people in the community through commitment to the arts throughout her 17 years with the Mississauga Arts Council and has been an integral part of the establishment of major milestones in the history of the arts in Mississauga.

Laurie was also instrumental in the founding of the Living Arts Centre, a world-renowned state-of-the-art facility for the performing arts and visual arts in Mississauga. She recently took centre stage herself at the Living Arts Centre, picking up a Paul Harris Fellowship Award from the Mississauga Rotary Club.

Tomorrow evening I'll be joining Laurie's friends, family, arts council members and colleagues to thank her for her many years of service. I'd like to welcome Laurie Pallett to Queen's Park today. Please join me in wishing her all the best as she moves to meet new challenges in her career. Thank you, Laurie.

GREATER NAPANEE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I would like to take this opportunity to make the Legislature aware of one of eastern Ontario's finest treasures, the municipality of greater Napanee.

Monday's Toronto Star business section featured a full-length article about this wonderful location for urban alternatives. Fishermen already know Napanee as the walleye capital of Canada. However, the local BIA and the economic development office want Ontarians to know what else this historic community has to offer.

Under the guidance of a dynamic business improvement association, Napanee is revitalizing its downtown and enhancing its image as a place where you can get away from it all and still have it all. Eighteen businesses have recently opened or expanded in the town, including a tea room, a stained-glass shop and a financial services office. Napanee wants its downtown to be a tourist destination, an expression of the community and a place for growth. Several beautification initiatives are also restoring the community's historic charm.

I can personally vouch for the welcoming nature of this quaint community because in June of this year I established my constituency office in the downtown and have been very warmly welcomed there. Today I am pleased to welcome a group of students from Centre Hastings Secondary School in the public gallery. This group has come to the legislature from Madoc and we welcome the students today.

DAVID BRIDEL

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I am pleased to inform the Legislature that on November 10 this year the most courageous police officers in Ontario were honoured in a ceremony here at Queen's Park. The Honourable Hilary M. Weston, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and Dave Tsubouchi, Solicitor General, awarded the Ontario Medal for Police Bravery in the main lobby of the Legislative Building.

This year, seven police officers received the province's highest honour for bravery in their profession. I'm proud to stand in the House today and inform colleagues that one of the recipients was Constable David Bridel of the Niagara Regional Police Service.

On the morning of August 30, 1998, police officers responded to a 911 call involving a motor vehicle accident in St Catharines. The accident had left a truck on its side and in flames in the roadway with the driver still trapped inside. Constable Bridel needed to climb into the rear of the still-burning vehicle to cut the driver's lap belt. Constable Bridel was able to free the driver and managed to drag the victim out through the back of the vehicle to safety.

Constable Bridel was recognized for the perilous situation he placed himself in to save the life of the driver. I want to thank Constable Bridel for his demonstrated bravery and his continuing dedicated work with the Niagara Regional Police Service.

MICHAEL IRWIN

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'm very proud that a monument will be raised dedicated to the police officers in this province who have lost their lives in the line of duty. In the throne speech, the government mentioned the case of Barbara Irwin, whose husband was shot and killed while protecting the safety of the people of Ontario. However, the government has not cast attention on the fate of Barbara's son, Michael Irwin. Michael was also a police officer.

While serving the people of Ontario, Mr Irwin shattered both his knees pursuing a criminal who had stolen a truck and robbed a store. A specialist informed him that he would never walk again.

Officer Irwin was eventually transferred to the Ontario Police College as a firearms instructor. However, the barriers he faced as a person with a disability, combined with the constant pain in his knees, made the job an

uphill battle. Eventually Michael had to give in and resign his position.

What has the government done for Officer Irwin, a fallen member of our province's police force? A 53% disability pension. This officer has gotten no settlement from the police force or the province. When the time came to make his home wheelchair-accessible, the province left him with a \$53,000 debt.

The former Solicitor General said that this case would be a priority. I have the details of the case here and I hope that the new Solicitor General will take a personal interest. As someone who has defended our safety and our property, giving his own health for us, Mr Irwin deserves better treatment than this.

I will close with Michael Irwin's own words: "Being a police officer was the only job that I ever wanted. I was happiest on the road and loved helping people. Now I am the one needing help."

NORTHUMBERLAND CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to bring to your attention the sea of colour and beauty that arrive in Northumberland each year during the holiday season.

With the intention of warming people's spirits, the town of Campbellford-Seymour has erected more than 100 light displays in Old Mill Park along the historic Trent Canal.

The Showcase of Lights officially opens on Saturday evening, the highlight being the giant illuminated \$2 coin.

Last Friday, Christmas Magic arrived in the town of Cobourg. The historic Victoria Hall and Victoria Park are brought to life with a festive light display.

Last Sunday evening the special lights came on in the town of Brighton.

In Port Hope the historic surroundings of this community are also complemented. Thousands of colourful lights honour the majestic town hall and the bandshell to celebrate the holiday season.

These named communities, along with the many others, are indeed to be congratulated. Their efforts serve to enlighten the festive spirit and to help us shed the dismal feelings that the onslaught of winter generally brings.

I take this opportunity to encourage everyone to come to Northumberland and take just a few moments to enjoy the displays, the surroundings and the wonderful hospitality that are offered in that county.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I rise today to pay tribute to Trish Balon and the labour movement she was a part of. This morning Trish Balon was laid to rest. She died of breast cancer. She was a mother of three and only 36 years old.

Trish found out in 1994 that she indeed had breast cancer, and within 18 months she discovered that eight

co-workers were also diagnosed with cancer. That's when her real fight began. In fact her fight was so well known and so well respected that Chatelaine magazine named her Woman of the Year in 1998.

Trish's name was mentioned yesterday at the Ontario Federation of Labour convention meeting this week, when they were dealing with their policy paper, Occupational Disease: Shifting the Burden. Trish's name was mentioned along with those of many other brave workers who have died because of exposures in the workplace, and we know what's happening in Sarnia right now, as we speak.

This government's agenda has been one of attacking and taking away those things that protect the health of workers in the workplace, not the least of which is that you're killing the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, dismantling the WCB and, probably most awful of all, destroying the Occupational Disease Panel. As a result, labour will respond and rise to the occasion. Labour is going to create their own royal commission to make the linkages between these exposures and workers who are dying in the workplace, and they ought not to be.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BLUE MOUNTAIN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION ACT, 1999

Mr Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr14, An Act respecting Blue Mountain Village Association.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

GAS PRICE WATCHDOG ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR L'AGENT DE SURVEILLANCE DES PRIX DU CARBURANT

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 18, An Act respecting the Price of Motor Vehicle Fuel and the appointment of a Gas Price Watchdog /
Projet de loi 18, Loi concernant le prix du carburant pour véhicules automobiles et la nomination d'un agent de surveillance des prix du carburant.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A short explanation by the member.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Mr Speaker, the main purpose of the bill is to ensure that retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers of motor vehicle fuel be accountable to the public with respect to the pricing of this fuel.

The bill would establish the office of gas price watchdog, to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in

Council. The gas price watchdog would monitor and report to the minister on pricing practices in the province with respect to motor vehicle fuel and conduct inquiries into pricing practices on the order of the minister.

DEFERRED VOTES

TAXPAYER PROTECTION AND BALANCED BUDGET ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES ET L'ÉQUILIBRE BUDGÉTAIRE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 7, An Act to protect taxpayers against tax increases, to establish a process requiring voter approval for proposed tax increases and to ensure that the Provincial Budget is a balanced budget / Projet de loi 7, Loi protégeant les contribuables des augmentations d'impôt, établissant un processus d'approbation des projets d'augmentation d'impôt par les électeurs et garantissant l'équilibre du budget provincial.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1354 to 1359.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Ecker, Janet	Mushinski, Marilyn
Arnott, Ted	Elliott, Brenda	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bartolucci, Rick	Gill, Raminder	Parsons, Ernie
Beaubien, Marcel	Guzzo, Garry J.	Peters, Steve
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hardeman, Ernie	Phillips, Gerry
Boyer, Claudette	Harris, Michael D.	Pupatello, Sandra
Brown, Michael A.	Hastings, John	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Runciman, Robert W.
Caplan, David	Johns, Helen	Ruprecht, Tony
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Sergio, Mario
Cleary, John C.	Klees, Frank	Skarica, Toni
Clement, Tony	Kwinter, Monte	Snobelen, John
Coburn, Brian	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sterling, Norman W.
Colle, Mike	Levac, David	Stewart, R. Gary
Conway, Sean G.	Mariand, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Cordiano, Joseph	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Crozier, Bruce	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Cunningham, Dianne	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
DeFaria, Carl	McGuinty, Dalton	Turnbull, David
Di Cocco, Caroline	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlauffer, Wayne
Dombrowsky, Leona	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	Murdoch, Bill	Wood, Bob
Dunlop, Garfield		

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Hampton, Howard	Marchese, Rosario
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Martel, Shelley
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Martin, Tony

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 76; the nays are 9.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Be it resolved that the bill is now passed.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On this 10th anniversary of the resolution put forward by Ed Broadbent in the House of Commons to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000, I ask for unanimous consent for all-party statements to confirm our commitment to eradicating child poverty in Ontario.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous agreement? I am afraid I heard some noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Premier. This afternoon we'll be debating a motion put forward by the Liberal caucus in the name of Steve Peters, our critic for disabled issues. The motion calls for the enactment of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act no later than two years from today's date.

This will afford you a third occasion to endorse a motion that is going to be adopted by this House. The last two times this motion was adopted—unanimously, by the way—you did nothing. Ontario's disabled now know that the single greatest barrier they face in reaching their full potential is not their disability; it is your inability to keep your promise.

We've got the technology today to overcome virtually every conceivable disability. All we need is a Premier with the integrity to follow through on his promise and the leadership to get the job done.

Will you show your integrity? Will you take some leadership and pass a real Ontarians with Disabilities Act today?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I don't believe we're in a position to pass an act today. I think that was the question. There is no act before us today. What we have, though, is a government, for the first time in the history of Canada, that had the courage (a) to commit to an act and (b) to bring forward a piece of legislation to the Legislature. When some of the groups for the disabled, who must have been sorely disappointed that the Liberals for five years did nothing, that the NDP for five years did nothing, that no other government in Canada had the courage either to commit to or bring forward a bill—we said, "Just being the first, the best and the most comprehensive in Canada is not good enough." So we complied with the wishes of the disabled community and those who support it and said, "We'd like some more time."

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Premier's time is expired.

Mr McGuinty: I'll do the Premier a favour. Since he forgets his record, I will remind him of his record. Five years ago, you delivered a written promise to pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act in the first term of office, and you did nothing. In fact, you did something worse than that. You introduced a sham, a gutless and toothless bill, which was an embarrassment and an insult to the 1.5 million Ontarians who have disabilities. That's the record. That's exactly what you did.

We have put forward another resolution. We intend to keep bringing this matter forward again and again, Premier. When are you going to have the decency to honour a commitment that you made over five years ago?

Hon Mr Harris: I reiterate for the Liberal Party, who are johnny-come-latelies to a disabilities act, that yes, we committed to a bill; yes, we honoured the commitment and introduced it in the Legislature; yes, we had the courage when those groups said: "We'd like the bill to be more comprehensive or changed here or changed there. We'd like some time for some more consultations." Not only did we have the courage to be the first in Canada, to be the first Legislature—and I know the Liberals looked at it. It's in the records in the ministry—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Please take a seat. The member for Windsor West, please come to order. I cannot hear the Premier's answer.

Hon Mr Harris: I know the Liberals looked at it when they were in office. The records are in the ministry. You rejected it. You said, "Oh, too difficult to do; too expensive to do; not a priority for Liberals." I know the New Democratic Party did the same, "Too expensive to do; not a priority for New Democrats." We accepted the challenge, and we will meet the challenge, just as we have with cutting taxes, with bringing excellence in education, with revamping the health care system. We accept—

The Speaker: Order, Premier, time.

Mr McGuinty: You continue to insult the 1.5 million Ontarians who have disabilities. If you wanted to act in a flash, you could. That's what you did when it came to 200 squeegee kids in downtown Toronto. You had that law on the books and passed in short order. But now, when it comes to dealing with 1.5 million Ontarians who suffer from disabilities—and remember, Premier, they're not asking for goodwill here. These are people of ability, who merely want a place at the table, who want to make a contribution, and you are the guy who stands between them and making a contribution to the Ontario economy. This is a lot more than just social policy; it's good economic policy. If you had a feeling for what's happening in this province, you would understand that.

Premier, I want you to stand up now and explain one more time to the disabled community why you are continuing to let them down.

Hon Mr Harris: The overwhelming vast majority in the disabled community understands very well that this is

the first government with the courage to actually come forward, commit to a bill and to bring a bill before the House. I would not say it is unanimous. I don't expect unanimity; I don't expect everyone to agree. But I think there is unanimity in the fact of this: The Liberal Party didn't have the courage, the NDP didn't have the courage and this party, this team of men and women, had the courage to say, "As challenging as it is, as difficult as it is, we're going to strive to bring forward a bill for the disabled of this province, and we're prepared to lead Canada in that."

I understand you have a resolution today. You committed in the campaign three years; the New Democratic Party two years. I understand you're playing catch-up with the New Democratic Party. We all know the hokey politics you play. We know the hokey politics of your resolution today. Now you've caught up to the NDP, a party that did nothing, just like you did when you had the chance.

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GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My second question is to the Premier. Premier, I've got a question for you and it's about gas gouging and buck passing. You are passing the buck, as is your wont, in keeping with your nature, to the federal government while Ontario motorists continue to be gouged by gas companies, people who prime your fundraising pump on an ongoing basis. When are you going to stand up and take some leadership and defend the interests of Ontario motorists?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think we should put a few things on the record today. When the Liberals were in office, on January 1, 1988, the gas tax was 8.3 cents a litre; they hiked gas taxes on April 1, 1988, to 9.3 cents a litre; they hiked gas taxes again in 1989 to 10.3 cents; they hiked gas taxes again on January 1, 1990, to 11.3 cents per litre.

The one thing there is undeniable full control of within the provincial jurisdiction is the provincial taxes. Your record was to hike them; our record was to freeze them. For the first time in the history of this province we have a government that has not increased gas taxes the way you did.

Mr McGuinty: Gas prices have gone up 20 cents a litre on your watch, Premier, and now what you are effectively saying is that you are washing your hands of this, that there is nothing you can do. Ontario consumers are not only getting hosed at the pump, they're getting hosed by their own Premier, a guy who refuses to stand up for their interests.

Twenty cents a litre, Premier, translates into an additional \$8 million in costs for Ontario motorists every single day. That's \$240 million every month. If you go through four and a half months, Ontario motorists are paying another \$1 billion.

They're looking to you, Premier, to stand up and protect their interests. We've put forward three solid ideas—you can pick any one of them—that will help defend the interests of Ontario motorists. Premier, again, when are you going to stand up and start protecting the interests of Ontario motorists?

Hon Mr Harris: I think it's important for Ontario motorists to understand that when you were in government you had the opportunity and you did nothing to protect consumers. In fact, what you did is you gouged consumers. You not only increased income taxes to record levels, you not only increased sales taxes, but you increased gas taxes as well. The one thing that a provincial government has control over with gas prices is provincial gas taxes. Your record is very clear.

Let's look as well at what happened when we got Liberals in Ottawa. What kind of ilk do we have there? In 1995, from 8.5 cents to 10 cents a litre. Ottawa also decided to apply the GST to gas tax—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Premier, take your seat. I cannot hear the Premier's answer and I need to be able to hear the Premier's answer. Thank you, Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: The Liberal record on gas is clear: Do nothing, whine, bitch, bellyache and hike taxes as high as you can in Queen's Park and in Ottawa.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the Premier to withdraw that comment.

Hon Mr Harris: I will withdraw that comment and double the bellyache.

Mr McGuinty: I can see that this is just not that big an issue for the Premier. Premier, may I suggest that one of these days you physically remove yourself from your chauffeur-driven car, get into your own car, drive into a gas station, approach the kiosk and find out how much Ontario motorists are getting hosed. If you are so distant from Ontario motorists, so removed from what's going on in real Ontario that you don't understand how pressing an issue this is for Ontario motorists, we do. We put forward three solid ideas: You can outlaw predatory gas pricing, you can appoint a watchdog with the clout to protect consumers, and you can protect whistle-blowers who expose price fixing.

Premier, you can stand up for Ontarians by passing our bill today. I'm telling you, stop passing the buck and pass a law here in Ontario that protects our motorists.

Hon Mr Harris: I understand there is a leadership review this weekend, and I understand on the road from Damascus—I understand the inaction of the Liberal Party. Your only record on gas prices is the same as on sales tax, the same as on income tax, the same as on corporate tax: to increase taxes.

We have taken definitive action. We froze taxes for the first time in the history of this Legislature. Then, today, we passed a historic piece of legislation, third reading, to make sure that no government this century or next century, this millennium or the next millennium, can ever again rip off the taxpayers the way the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party did in this province.

SPORTS FACILITY TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. With Liberal support, you've just passed legislation that will require future governments to hold a referendum before they make tax changes. But at the same time, you're going to give millionaire NHL hockey franchises \$16 million in tax subsidies, and you admit, and your finance minister admits, that those tax subsidies will require other taxpayers to pay higher taxes.

Premier, if you think referenda are a good idea, why don't you hold a referendum on forcing other taxpayers to pay higher taxes in order to give NHL millionaires more money?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the question. It's a very thoughtful question. It demonstrates an understanding that if you cut taxes in one area, you either have to reduce spending or you have to increase taxes in another area. It's something the Liberals never seemed to understand when they were in office.

I can tell you that we have offered a potential tax break, if you like, to no NHL team in Ontario. What we have offered is to owners of facilities, where they are public arenas, if they have been built at private-sector expense instead of completely built at taxpayer expense the way most of them are. There are four such facilities in this province that accommodate all kinds of activities, not just professional hockey but concerts and other activities. We have offered the municipalities an option to put them on a level playing field. In Ottawa-Carleton, this would mean, should they opt to do that, the other taxpayers will have to make a decision and increase their taxes in support of having this Corel—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Premier's time. Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: You can try to disguise this however you wish. I had a debate with the owner of the Ottawa Senators last week, and he recognizes this for what it is. He says very clearly that this is going to be a tax subsidy for NHL hockey teams.

He also said that he's not done yet. He intends to go to the municipality and he intends to go to the federal government and perhaps back to you and ask for even more money.

All we need to do is look at the Winnipeg Jets. We know where this leads. First they wanted \$2 million. They got it. Then they asked for \$20 million. They got it. Then they asked for \$50 million. They got it. Then they left town and now they're down in Phoenix asking taxpayers there for a US\$330-million subsidy.

1420

Premier, you have clearly started us on a slippery slope. What I'm asking you is this: Before you get us into this subsidy game where NHL hockey franchises keep coming back and asking for more tax subsidies, will you at least follow your own instincts and hold a referendum, hold public hearings—

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: As this is not within our hands, because we don't intend to increase anybody's taxes, it would be within the purview of the municipal government, in whose hands this is now, to hold a referendum. We would certainly encourage them either to hold a referendum or ensure there is public support for whichever action they take.

I want to say, with reference to your comments about the owner of the Ottawa Senators, we know that at this moment in time the ownership of the Senators is tied in with the ownership of the Corel Centre. We have no idea if that will be the case in the future, but I can say unequivocally that if they wish to ask the federal government for money, Minister Manley has said, "Yes"; "No"; "Maybe"; "I'm the champion"; "No, I'm not"; "Who knows?" Who knows what the Liberals will say, but that will be up to the Liberals in Ottawa. Any further subsidy from the municipal government will be up to them. Any subsidy from us for an NHL team, the answer has been flat out, "No."

Mr Hampton: Premier, you can try to disguise this any way you wish. You know that your bill provides for municipal subsidy, and then you are also going to subsidize them off the education portion of the property tax, money that would go to education. Since I think I heard you say you're not going to increase anyone else's taxes to subsidize NHL millionaires, that can only mean further cuts. That can only mean taking money away from some of the public necessities.

I've got another proposition for you, Premier. Since this means taking money away from education and other public necessities, how about doing something to replace some of that money? I even brought you an Ottawa Senators shirt. You can wear it.

The Speaker: Take your seat, member. The member will know you're not allowed to use props.

Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Premier, if you want the Ottawa Senators shirt, here's the proposition. We know this either means other taxpayers paying more taxes or it means cuts to other public necessities. You can have the Ottawa Senators shirt. We'll hold a charity shootout and we can give the proceeds to the United Way or something. But your government has to do something to replace the money that's going to be lost if you're going to give tax subsidies to NHL millionaire hockey franchises. Which is it? Are you going to cut them or are you going to replace the money? Here's a proposition to replace the money. What's your answer?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: No, no, listen, I don't know why the Liberals mock the NDP when they come up with a constructive suggestion and an idea to help the people of this province.

Let me commit to you a couple of public policy things, since that was in your question. Let me commit to you this: It should, the municipality, and we don't know whether it will. We've had a pretty clear indication from Toronto, but should the municipality of Ottawa-Carleton

or Kanata opt to put the tax situation at the Corel Centre on a more level playing field with other arenas across the province? And that will affect the education portion, which you know we've frozen for the first time in the history of this province. I commit to you this: Not one penny as a result of that will be cut out of any government program here in Ontario. I can commit that to you because now we're going into a decade of budgetary surpluses in Ontario for the first time certainly in recent—

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Premier will know that he has about a minute. I would appreciate it if, when I call order, he would take his seat.

New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I would say, Premier, you'd have us believe that the money is going to come from thin air. It's either going to come from someone else paying higher taxes or it's going to come from someone else being cut.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is also for the Premier. I want to ask you about another difficult question. Today is the 10th anniversary of the House of Commons resolution that aimed to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. As we reflect on your government, your government has put in place measures that have actually increased child poverty. Let me give you one example: Your 22% cut to social assistance involved a very heavy cut to the shelter allowance subsidy. Meanwhile, you've all but eliminated rent controls such that rent has gone up by 13% over the last two years.

Premier, how do you justify putting in place policies which cut the shelter allowance for families and children and, meanwhile, you put in place policies which raise the rents by 13% in two years?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Minister of Community and Social Services can answer.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): The welfare of young children living in poverty is obviously a tremendous priority for everyone in Ontario. It's a priority for this government, it's a priority for the federal government, for the municipal governments, for the private sector and for volunteer organizations.

We believe there are a whole host of things we can do to help raise the standard of living of children. We're putting more money towards children's aid societies; we're putting more money to support services for children, Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, more money for autistic children, more money in children's mental health. We also know that the single greatest thing we can do for a child living in poverty is to help their parents get a job. That's why economic growth and job creation is a tremendous priority for this government. That's why our

number one priority since we were elected is the creation of jobs. While more than 600,000 jobs have been created, that's not enough. We realize we've got more work to do, and that's why we're committed to a growing Ontario economy, to create more hope and more opportunity.

Mr Hampton: We're talking about children here, Minister. While you brag, the fact of the matter is that child poverty is growing faster in this province than anywhere else in Canada and child poverty is a bigger problem today than it has ever been in Ontario.

The question was very simple. You've done away with rent controls. That has forced rents up by literally 15% over the last two years. At the same time, you cut the shelter allowance, which means that poor families have less money to pay for rent when the rent is increasing. A very simple suggestion was put forward by Anne Golden: Will you raise the shelter allowance portion of social assistance so that it equals 85% of the average rent, so that children will at least have a roof over their heads? Would you do just that simple thing to start to deal with the problem?

Hon Mr Baird: Addressing child poverty is a priority of this government. Children at risk need a whole host of specialized services to improve their lives. With respect to social assistance rates, our rates in Ontario are substantially higher than the average of the other nine provinces. They're a tremendous priority. No level of poverty is acceptable. That's why we're providing an economic growth agenda to try to provide more jobs to people in their community. We also provide a whole host of opportunities: \$2.5 million provided annually for the child nutrition partnership, to create 756 child nutrition programs; the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, providing \$57 million in funding this year; \$5 million provided to the Better Beginnings, Better Futures program, providing programs to more than 4,000 children across the province; a \$10-million grant to the Invest in Kids Foundation, to support early intervention initiatives for high-risk children; an additional \$170 million for child welfare, to help our children's aid societies protect children. Children are a tremendous priority of this government and we're looking—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Time.

1430

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Gas prices continue to soar across Ontario as we speak. All you have done so far is to blame, whine and finger-point at the feds, and you set up your worthless, pass-the-buck committee which will study the issue for another six months.

Minister, why won't you act to protect Ontario consumers? Why are you so afraid and unwilling to take on the big oil companies? Why don't you use your power to freeze and roll back gas prices just like Bill Davis did in 1975? When are you going to stand up for the consumer

and bring these oil companies to account just like Bill Davis did in 1975?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): The only things reminiscent of 1975 are Gerry Phillips's ties and the fact that the Liberals are going through a leadership review again.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Runciman: We're trying to be very constructive in this exercise. We're not simply playing the blame game, like other governments before us. We're trying to offer a very significant look at the gasoline pricing situation in Ontario.

We have appointed four outstanding members of this assembly—Mr Tascona and Mr O'Toole, who are co-chairing; Mr Newman and Mr Chudleigh, who will be supporting—and we're going to be reporting back to the government and to the assembly and to the federal government and other jurisdictions by May of this—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time. Supplementary.

Mr Colle: Since July 3, Ontario motorists are being gouged up to \$6 million a day because of the price hike brought about by the big oil companies, and all you've done is blame Ottawa.

You have the legislative power to protect consumers. For the last four years we have introduced three bills to stop the gouging. We don't need six more months of study and finger pointing. Your pass-the-buck committee is a sham, an excuse to do nothing. The jump in gas prices is a windfall for big oil companies at the expense of Ontario consumers.

Again, why don't you do what Bill Davis did in 1975, stand up to the oil companies and protect Ontario motorists?

Hon Mr Runciman: There has never been an investigative review of gasoline pricing in Ontario under the Liberals or under the NDP. Despite what the member is suggesting here, I go back a long way in this assembly, and in 1986, when I was the critic for consumer and commercial relations, I asked the then Treasurer to have a special debate. Mr Nixon at the time said, "That's not an important enough issue for this assembly to deal with." Later that year I asked the question—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, please take your seat. Order. I cannot hear the answer. Minister.

Hon Mr Runciman: Later that year, 1986, I asked the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Mr Kwinter, to conduct an investigative review of gasoline pricing in Ontario. His response at the time was, "It's a federal problem; it has nothing to do with the province." Get your act together.

Interjections.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: I have framed in my den at the moment the exchange that took place between Mr Runciman and myself, and at that time his answer was in fact that he could do nothing about it when he was the minister.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent from the House to allow the minister to have more time to answer the question, to tell us whether he'll pass my bill.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? I heard some noises.

COST OF ELECTRIC POWER

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): My question is for the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. Municipal utilities all across the province are accusing this government of forcing them to make huge profits by gouging customers, not unlike the oil companies, and leaving them no choice but to raise rates. How do you reply to these outrageous misstatements of fact?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I thank the member for Ottawa West-Nepean for the question, because all members, I think, see in their local papers and through the media that our public utilities commissions or municipal electric utilities are all dreaming up various schemes on how they might make a cash grab out of their electrical utilities. I simply want to reiterate to the honourable member, the members of this chamber and to the mayors and councils across this province that there is nothing in Bill 35, the Energy Competition Act, that would drive up prices.

This whole restructuring of the electricity system and bringing in true competition beginning next year is all about increasing our competitiveness, having the lowest possible prices and ensuring that we attract even more jobs and build on the record job creation that has occurred in this province under the leadership of Mike Harris and this government.

I warn municipal leaders not to do anything that would drive up local distribution costs. At the end of the day, there's only one electricity customer and that customer—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, it's time. Supplementary?

Mr Guzzo: Currently, decisions being made by municipalities in and around the Ottawa-Carleton area will see them cash in on a huge windfall, ignoring the advice of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to wait until local restructuring decisions have been made. Recently, the regional chair in Ottawa-Carleton, my predecessor of happy memory in the Ottawa West part of my riding, has said that action is needed to prevent the balkanization of hydroelectric assets.

What are you prepared to do to ensure that local politicians don't try to bail themselves out of their financial mistakes by stealing money from electricity customers, creating huge election slush funds for themselves and blaming this government?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again it's an excellent question from my colleague. I'll remind all honourable members

that Mr Laughren, who was appointed by this government as the chair of the Ontario Energy Board to protect consumers, has made it very clear that he and the Ontario Energy Board, as the regulator, will not tolerate a cash grab and will not tolerate any actions by municipalities that will drive up local distribution costs unnecessarily.

There are four principles, which I want to ensure all members are aware of, contained in the energy board guidelines, which are available to municipalities, the draft guidelines now and the final guidelines in a few days. The four principles are to protect consumers, facilitate competition, provide non-discriminatory access and promote economic efficiency.

My challenge to the municipal electric utilities, given that there are still 250 MEUs in this province, that's 10 times more than in the rest of Canada combined, is: Show some backbone and come to this government with a plan to lower your costs.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. On November 9, I had the opportunity to meet with Penny Hartin, the executive director of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, and tour their facilities. While on my visit there that day, she relayed to me a most disappointing fact. She would like to know something, and Ontario's thousands of people with visual impairments would like to know something: Why are the self-assessment application forms in the Ontario disability support program not available in Braille?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Obviously, providing services to people with disabilities is a priority for the government, particularly under the Ontario disability support program. We proclaimed that new legislation just this past year, designed to provide a higher benefit rate for recipients, designed to provide greater employment supports. I will be very happy to take the issue back to the ministry. In fact, as the member opposite has suggested, I would think it would be a rather easy opportunity to pick the solution. I'll certainly commit the undertaking to the member opposite that we'll look into the matter and make the change if it's required.

1440

Mr Peters: This is not a new program. As you've just relayed to us, the program has been in place for over a year. You've been minister for over five months, and I appreciate your comments today.

Minister, there are copies of the resolution that I wrote two weeks ago already available in Braille. I wouldn't want any people attending the debate this afternoon to be unable to receive and read a copy of that motion. You've had years to put this application in Braille and your office and your department obviously haven't done that. Do you know what your staff is telling people? "Come in and

we'll fill out the forms for you. We'll treat you like an illiterate child and rob you of your dignity."

Minister, I appreciate your comments today because I believe you're doing the right thing, but I would really appreciate an apology to those visually impaired people who have been discriminated against by this government because of your thoughtlessness.

Hon Mr Baird: The Canadian National Institute for the Blind does some tremendous work around the province of Ontario. They provide a significant amount of good work to citizens in Ontario. They provide the government with a substantial amount of good advice. I certainly will commit and undertake to the House that I'll take the issue back to the ministry and we'll have the necessary forms put into Braille so that all Ontarians can take advantage of an outstanding program, the Ontario disability support program.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Like many Ontarians, I have been following closely the dispute between Minnesota and Ontario regarding walleye stocks in Lake of the Woods. I know that Minnesota has insisted on treating this conservation issue as a trade issue and that through the United States—

Interjections.

Mr Johnson: I'm sorry, do I have the floor? Well, then, keep quiet.

Interjections.

Mr Johnson: Well, shut up and listen then.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member, it is not helpful when you yell across to other members to shut up. I will try to maintain order, but it's not helpful when you do that. Question?

Mr Johnson: I'm sorry I did that. I really apologize. I just didn't want to be interrupted continuously, that's all.

Through the United States trade representatives they were pushing a NAFTA challenge to gain open and unfettered access to the walleye on Ontario's side of the lake. Minister, can you update the House on this issue?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to thank the member for Perth-Middlesex for the good question that was so eloquently put.

First and foremost, let me advise members of this chamber that the difference between Minnesota and Ontario in the conservation of walleye stock is the determination of Ontario anglers and Ontario tourist operators to protect our stocks now and for the future.

Sadly, the state of Minnesota and the United States government have viewed conservation efforts as a trade issue. In reviewing our regulations, we had three goals: to protect our walleye stocks in the Lake of the Woods area, to ensure that the regulation could not be positioned as a trade issue, and to ensure that the new regulation had the support of anglers in the Rainy Lake and Lake of the

Woods area. I am proud to say we've achieved all three goals.

Mr Johnson: Now that the trade issue has been resolved and you have established Ontario's right to manage its own natural resources as confirmed, what is the next step?

Hon Mr Snobelen: This is an important issue in natural resources and obviously an important issue for people in Ontario. I've said already there's a very big difference between the conservation efforts of anglers in Ontario and the conservation efforts of the people in the state of Minnesota. I am glad to say that during our discussions with the state of Minnesota we were able to point out to them that they had a daily catch limit in Minnesota of some 14 walleye, while the people of Ontario had a daily catch limit of four walleye—a big difference.

During this dispute and during our conversations, Minnesota made a key concession. They have agreed to lower their catch limit to put less pressure on the fish stocks in this very important area. I think that bodes well for the future of cooperation between Minnesota and Ontario, and well for those people who are interested in conservation.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): My question is for the Premier. Today is the one-year anniversary of your government's pathetic excuse for the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It was an embarrassment and an insult and another broken promise. Your government has continued to treat persons with disabilities like second-class citizens. As the NDP has pointed out repeatedly, the Ontario disability support program is in a state of chaos because of your mismanagement.

Premier, you're obsessed with cutting red tape for everybody else, but when it comes to persons with disabilities you are satisfied to create more barriers. A year has passed and all you can come up with is some vague promise of an action plan. Tell me why it is that your government can turn around record amounts of legislation overnight, but when it comes to the needs of 1.5 million Ontarians with disabilities you stall, delay and make excuses. Tell us why, Premier.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm surprised, actually, after the abysmal record that the Liberal Party has on this issue that they raised it and I'm surprised, after the abysmal record of your party, that you raise this issue.

Clearly this is a challenging issue, to find the right balance. Obviously, it is challenging and difficult, because if it was easy even you would have done it. Recognizing the challenges and the difficulties, just as we tackled the \$11-billion deficit you left us, just as we tackled the record-high taxes that were destroying any ability to have programs in this province, just as we tackled hospital restructuring that you and the Liberals talked about, we have tackled coming in with a meaning-

ful disabilities act, the first of its kind in the history of Canada. I would have thought you would have stood up and said, "Thank you, Premier, for having that courage."

Ms Churley: Premier, since you came to power in 1995, your government has made things worse for people with disabilities. You got rid of the NDP's Employment Equity Act and replaced it with nothing. Disabled people would be able to find work if you hadn't gotten rid of that act. You dumped our transportation accessibility programs. You've even cut the Human Rights Commission. On top of that, the Ontario disability support program is in a state of chaos.

Premier, don't you stand there today and tell me that our party did nothing. Your government has the worst record of any in the history of this province on disability issues. You're the government. You made the promise. You commit today to keep that promise. Enough of this nonsense.

Hon Mr Harris: Nice speech today in opposition, but here's your record in government: The last New Democrat who actually cared enough to bring something forward was Gary Malkowski. He brought a bill forward. We got it forward to committee. You had a majority government. Your government buried his bill, refused to carry it forward. You would not deal with it and you would not act on it.

Interjections: Shame.

Hon Mr Harris: "Shame" is right.

Now, the same Gary Malkowski has expressed concern. He would like to have a Premier with the courage to deal with the bill. This is the Gary Malkowski who came here of his own volition, now that he was no longer a member, probably discouraged with the New Democratic Party, and when we created a separate category and took those with disabilities out of welfare, stood up and said, "This move by Mike Harris and the Ontario Conservative Party is the best thing to happen to the disabled in my lifetime."

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): My question is to the Minister of Education. Last week, in a leaked cabinet document which you denied existed but the Minister of Colleges and Universities acknowledged indeed was a leaked document, your government proposed to cut a further \$800 million from our educational system. Senior officials of both my boards of education, both of which were cited by your Education Improvement Commission as excellent examples of being proactive and forward looking in such things as joint purchasing, transportation and even operating a joint school, say they cannot absorb any further cuts. This was confirmed by the report of the Education Improvement Commission as well. You did not announce those cuts, but, Minister, there is still a lot of fear and anxiety on the part of parents, teachers, students and the entire education community that you will make further cuts unannounced in the near future.

Will you categorically state in this House and to the people of Ontario that you have no plan, no intention and that there will be no further cuts to our publicly funded education system in Ontario?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): With all due respect to the honourable member, I would ask him where he has been for a week, when this question was raised in the Legislature before and I answered it here, and I've answered it in the scrums and it has been in the media.

I would like to say, first of all, that I have never, ever made any comments about any kind of proposals that may or may not be before ministers or cabinet. I do not discuss that. It is not appropriate for ministers to discuss that. What I very clearly said, and I'll say it again, is that the Toronto Star article is not the government's plan. I authorized no such plan. It is not the government's plan.

I appreciate that there are circulation battles going on in this town, but when I went to journalism school they told me that a newspaper should check both sides of the story before they printed it. It might have been helpful if they'd done it on that paper.

1450

Mr Gerretsen: I take that as a no, that you will not have any further cuts to education in any way, shape or form during your mandate.

Senior officials in both of these boards of education, the Limestone and the Algonquin and Lakeshore boards, say that any further cuts in their funding will put at serious risk such programs as special education assistance, adult education, training programs, English as a second language and further losses in speech and pathology as well as clinical staff to the school boards. As a matter of fact, they say that any further cuts will marginalize the poor and those with the greatest education needs, especially those requiring special education assistance.

Will you confirm and categorically state once again, because I take it you've already stated it, that you will not cut education any further at any time during your mandate within the next four years?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I would caution the honourable member to stop scaremongering here and to stop going for cheap political headlines.

My commitment, and this government's commitment, to classroom education is exactly today as it was in 1995, as it was in 1999 and as it will be in the future of this government. Our goal is to have the strongest and best public education system that it is possible to have in this province. We have taken many steps to do that. We're improving the curriculum, we're having higher standards, we have testing of students, we'll be introducing testing of teachers, all of these goals. We are protecting funding for special education. We are taking all of these steps to improve public education in this province, and our commitment stands.

TRUCKING SAFETY

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As you know, with our booming economy in Ontario, we've seen a large growth in trade and an increase in truck traffic crossing between Ontario and New York. In my riding, we have three bridges which see a lot of that truck traffic. We also have a big boom in tourism traffic, and of course that puts more cars on the road with those trucks.

Truck safety continues to be an issue that is of great concern to many of my constituents. During Remembrance Day week, I was on the Thursday in my own Legion, branch 479, and one of the ladies who talked to me that day said she loved the Premier, loved everything he was doing, but still had concerns about truck traffic in Ontario.

My constituents want to know that their government shares their concerns and is taking actions to ensure that our roads are safe. Last Friday, you attended a truck safety blitz in our region. What were the results of that safety blitz, and what are the results of other blitzes you've been doing around the province?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): That's a very good question from my colleague from Niagara. Indeed, our government takes truck safety extremely seriously. In our blitz on Friday, which I attended down in Welland, there were six MTO officers and five Niagara regional police officers. Some 44 charges were laid, of which 30 were for seat belt offences and nine were for equipment related offences.

If a truck has severe defects, the plates are taken from the truck. If the defects are critical, trucks are impounded for a minimum of 15 days.

Across the province since 1995, out-of-service rates have fallen by 42%. So our tough approach to trucking is paying off. We've taken tough action. I thank my colleague for the question.

Mr Maves: Minister, thank you for that update. I guess the answer shows us two things. One is that there has been a dramatic improvement across the province over the last four and a half years, and it also shows that there are still some unsafe trucks on the road. How is this government working to improve the safety on our highways by dealing with the very important issue of truck safety?

Hon Mr Turnbull: Our truck measures are the most stringent in the whole of North America. Our action on truck vehicles has included commercial vehicle impoundment. We're now operating 10 of our inspection stations 24 hours a day. We have absolute liability laws for wheel separations of \$50,000; that's the highest fine. The highest fines in North America are in this province for other safety-related offences on trucks at \$20,000.

We're proceeding with the carrier safety rating system, and of course I have announced a five-point action plan for road safety in this province, including 21 additional MTO enforcement officers in southwestern Ontario.

Out-of-service rates have reduced by 42% since 1995. Safety is our top priority.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Health. You are aware that for the first time, the doctor shortage in southwestern Ontario is the worst in the province. For the past four years I have been urging your government to introduce meaningful incentives to attract doctors to southwestern Ontario, and you have failed. One day you acknowledge the shortage and the next day you say no, it's distribution. While you dither about the cause, the doctor shortage is getting worse.

Let me tell you what it means in my community.

A patient is faced with the choice of waiting for your government to take action or seeking treatment elsewhere. This is the reality. Judy Vanderpol is a sole-support mother of three who desperately needs reconstruction surgery for her hip that was replaced 14 years ago. She has stomach bleeding and GI problems from the morphine and Tylenol medication she must take to cope with the pain. She doesn't know how much longer she'll be able to continue work. Her appointment is not until October 30, 2000. That is totally outrageous.

Do you think it's acceptable, Minister, that patients like Judy are forced to seek timely treatment outside the province because you have constantly failed the patients of Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I certainly share the concern of the member opposite. As the member well knows, this is an issue of long-standing concern. We do have an issue in this province of distribution. As you know, we have worked collectively and collaboratively with members in this House, we've worked with the Ontario Medical Association, in order to ensure that physicians can be encouraged to go to areas where they are most needed.

We have introduced incentives, we have introduced disincentives to physicians to stay in the overserved areas, and presently we are doing what no other government before us has done: We have asked Dr McKendry to examine the scope and the cause of the problem and come up with a report that will enable us to bring forward short- and long-term strategies in order that we can respond to all people in this province no matter where they live.

Mr Hoy: Minister, I don't want to hear about any more studies. Your solutions have failed. Only the policy you lifted from the Liberal election platform to pay for tuition fees for med students willing to practise in underserved areas can help. Yet you still float big stick approaches to beat up on doctors. Thank God you failed. Communities don't want indentured labour. There are many other solutions to attract doctors in our campaign document. When are you going to implement the rest of those?

1500

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just like to correct the record. I believe it was our member, Mrs Johns, who brought forward the proposal whereby we would provide free tuition for medical students in order that upon graduation they would go to areas where they were most needed. I would also hasten to add that our government has not penalized physicians. Our government has worked very collaboratively with physicians in this province and we have brought forward many, many initiatives.

We have, of course, the 20 northern underserved communities that are getting additional money to retain physicians and also being provided with overhead costs. We have the \$70-an-hour sessional fee. We have the community development officer program. We have the medical service corps. We have the community-sponsored contracts. These are all incentives that are designed to encourage doctors to go to areas where they are most—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. New question.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. This morning, Ontarians woke up to more newspaper headlines and media stories about the soaring price of gasoline. Despite substantial price hikes at the pumps yesterday, again today petroleum analysts are warning consumers that gas prices may soon reach 70 cents a litre. Consumers and business people in Ontario do not need headlines to tell them that price instability for gasoline is unacceptable.

The petroleum industry spin doctors tell us that the cause of the most recent price hike is the international cost of fuel; it's rising. They fail to take into account that prices at the pumps were lower when the international costs were higher than they are today and my constituents are irate with this explanation.

Minister, unlike the Liberals, except for the member for York Centre, I realize that ensuring competition in the petroleum industry is within federal jurisdiction. Is there any action our government can take on behalf of consumers to ensure they are benefiting from the lowest possible prices for gas?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I want to thank the member for his genuine interest in this issue, unlike the members of the Liberal opposition.

The member makes the point that the gasoline market price is the responsibility of the federal government, and Dan McTeague, a Liberal MP, has been trying to make this case with his federal Liberal colleagues for a number of years now, supported by, I think, 47 Liberal backbenchers, to make the case for change to the federal Competition Act, but the Liberal government has refused up to this point.

My predecessor, Mr Tsubouchi, approached the federal government on numerous occasions in the last two years asking them to act and they continue to refuse, not only refusing the request of the provincial government in Ontario, but their own backbench. We have decided, faced with the refusal of the federal government, to act, to go outside the box to conduct—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Wettlaufer: Price hikes at the gas pumps are infuriating my constituents. They view the petroleum industry as an uncontrolled oligopoly totally ignored by the federal government. I'm glad to see that we are not letting the federal government off the hook on this issue. I would like to be able to advise my constituents of some of the recommendations that the task force might make to the federal government. Are there any recommendations you could advise me of at this time?

Hon Mr Runciman: I don't want to prejudge the results of this review. This is going to be a very full and thorough review. We have some outstanding members of this assembly serving on the task force, and I want to say that this review is something that was called for by the leader of the official opposition in July of this year. Mr McGuinty asked for a review. We are following his advice. Unlike some members of his own caucus, we're following his advice and initiating this review.

It's regrettable that the Liberal opposition continues to try to make political hay of the situation, rather than dealing in a responsible and co-operative way with respect to addressing the concerns of consumers, not only in this province but right across our country.

We hope that by early next year we're going to be able to provide some very solid evidence and productive and workable recommendations and solutions to the federal Liberal government so they can no longer stonewall the consumers of Ontario.

The Speaker: The time for question period is over.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent to give the member another minute to answer, so he can answer whether he's going to pass my gas pricing bill.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? I heard some noises.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition that has been duly certified by the table. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we, the consumers, feel gas prices are too high throughout Ontario;

"Whereas we, the consumers, support the Ontario Liberal caucus's attempt to have the Mike Harris

government introduce predatory gas pricing legislation" and the Gas Price Watchdog Act;

"Whereas we, the consumers, want the Mike Harris government to act so that the consumer can get a break at the pumps rather than going broke at them;

"Whereas we, the consumers, are fuming at being hosed at the pumps and want Mike Harris to gauge our anger;

"Furthermore we, the consumers, want Mike Harris to know we want to be able to go to the pumps and fill our gas tanks without emptying our pockets;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce predatory gas pricing legislation" and the Gas Price Watchdog Act, 1999, "in order to control the amount of money we, the consumers, are forced to pay at the gas pumps."

Because I am in agreement, I affix my signature.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

MEDICAL LABORATORIES

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has recently imposed a retroactive cap on revenue earned by medical laboratories for services provided under the health insurance plan; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has also required these businesses to refund revenue for services rendered in previous years where the amount of that amount revenue exceeds the retroactively imposed cap for those years; and

"Whereas this legislation amounts to expropriation of economic rights without adequate compensation or due process of law; and

"Whereas the greatest incentive to the provision of efficient and quality services and products by the private sector is competition and the ability to make a profit; and

"Whereas the removal of these incentives by government negatively affects all of society and particularly patients in need; and

"Whereas this type of legislation also unfairly discriminates against one sector of the society;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That adequate protection of property rights is needed to ensure that government cannot erode the property rights of certain sectors of society without fair compensation and due process of law."

This petition has been certified by the Clerk and I am pleased to present it.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I have a petition of concerned citizens of the Maxville area. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposures to sexually explicit material;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail establishments;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

This contains over 300 signatures and I too affix my signature to it.

1510

MARRIAGE

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I have a certified petition. "This is a petition requesting the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invoke section 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in order to use the 'notwithstanding clause' to preserve provincial legislation threatened by the undemocratic Supreme Court decision to redefine the term 'spouse.'"

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I also have a certified petition today, stamped by the Clerk as valid. This petition goes to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government's decision to slash education funding could lead to the closure of many more neighbourhood schools, including one of the most community-oriented schools like Earls court Public School; and

"Whereas the present funding formula does not take into account the historic and cultural and demographic links that have communities connected to their areas nor the special education programs that have developed as a direct need of our communities; and

"Whereas the prospect of closing neighbourhood community schools will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion dollars from our schools; and

"Whereas Earls court Public School is a community school with many links to the immediate neighbourhood, such as daycare, a games room, an open gym, fitness classes and a site for sports activities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens, demand that the Harris government changes the funding formula to take into account historic, cultural and community links that Earls court Public School has established."

Since I agree with this petition, I am signing it as well.

OPPOSITION DAY

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

LOI SUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to move the following motion:

That an Ontarians with Disabilities Act that is strong and effective should be enacted no later than two years from today, November 23, 1999.

This resolution today is not about publicity and it's not about which party has done what or has not done what. This resolution is about improving the lives of 1.5 million Ontario citizens.

Today is the first anniversary of the introduction of Bill 83. That was a piece of legislation that did not do justice to the idea of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. However, we now have an opportunity to move beyond that bill and to set a deadline for the introduction of a strong, effective and enforceable Ontarians with Disabilities Act—an ODA with its own enforcement mechanism; an ODA with relevance to the private sector, government agencies and ministries; an ODA with some teeth.

Let me explain why this resolution must be passed today, and passed unanimously. Here are some basic facts that are beyond dispute. There are fully 1.5 million

Ontarians right now who have a disability, and probably many more. That number is growing because our society is aging. As each of us gets older, each of us is likely to get a disability. Looking at our future, the rate of children with disabilities is also growing significantly.

Disability touches everyone's life, and getting rid of barriers facing Ontarians with disabilities should be everyone's business. This is not a partisan issue. What party could possibly be in favour of preventing a person from getting a job and getting off social assistance? What MPP could vote to keep children from having a chance to educate themselves? Who could even consider voting to deny 1.5 million people the chance to participate in public life in Ontario? That is what a person would in effect be doing if they voted against this resolution today.

People with disabilities face unfair barriers every day of their lives, and Ontarians as a whole suffer as a result. They face barriers if they seek a job that they are qualified to do. They face barriers when they try to use services and facilities that others take for granted, like a bus, library, school, university or this very building. These barriers hurt us all. These barriers help no one. People with disabilities deserve to live in a province that is barrier-free.

When you walk into a skating rink to watch a child play hockey, count how many stairs you have to walk up. Think about the parent, though, who uses a wheelchair, who can never get to the rink to see their child play. Think about how a ramp would not be a costly modification to make, particularly if the building were designed to be accessible.

Consider the difficulties that a person with a visual handicap faces trying to work for a government ministry. Documents are rarely if ever available in Braille. Government Web sites are not designed to be read by audio reader computer programs. The elevators in most government buildings do not have Braille on the buttons to tell you the floors. This is how easy it would be to change things on a system-wide basis.

Children with hearing problems face a number of barriers in school. Because of a lack of qualified sign language interpreters, some students who are deaf have had to rely on unqualified, untrained interpreters such as family members and friends when they are at school. Teachers are given insufficient training to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Even this building, designed to be open to all the people of Ontario, is closed to those with disabilities. Both the east and west doors are completely inaccessible to those with disabilities. The front doors are completely inaccessible. The only doors open to the public lead into the basement. What is the symbolism of that?

Sign language interpreters are difficult to find and expensive to hire. Ontario Interpreter Services for sign language interpretation are only available for certain types of appointments, and with a problematic time limit. Assistive listening devices are not routinely available in the House. Poor acoustics in this chamber tend to amplify background noise, making it very difficult for people

who are hard of hearing. During question period, it is almost impossible for someone in the gallery with a hearing problem to make out what is being said in the debate. The two public galleries are inaccessible to the public if they are in a wheelchair. There is room for fewer than half a dozen people with wheelchairs in the Speaker's gallery.

Government documents are rarely available in Braille or on tape. The same goes for large print, which is needed by those who are hard of sight. When people with visual impairments come to the Legislature, many of the documents they request are not available in a medium they can use.

There is no Braille in almost all the elevators of this building. The pay telephones are not accessible for people in wheelchairs. This building has an exceptional number of small curbs and steps that limit access to many offices. A person who is powering his or her own wheelchair can find even a half-inch rise in the floor an insurmountable barrier. There is a lack of facilities where opposite-sex caregivers can accompany their employers into the washroom to undertake attendant care tasks.

Our offices are not marked in a medium that is legible to the visually impaired. It makes it very difficult for those who are visually impaired to find an office for the first time if a sighted person is not accompanying them. Parking spaces for drivers with disabilities are not always wide enough, and there are only a handful of accessible handicapped parking spots in the legislative parking lot.

1520

I understand that this is a historic building, but leaving persons with disabilities on the outside looking in marks Ontario's history. That must change. We need to eliminate these barriers and free persons with disabilities from a prison constructed through our own ignorance and apathy.

How are we going to get to that goal? We need a strong and effective law that is designed to achieve the goal of a barrier-free Ontario for all persons with disabilities. This is what a disabilities act must be. It is not good enough to point to the Charter of Rights and the Human Rights Code. In the most recent annual report, the Ontario Human Rights Commission itself acknowledged the need for this new law, and one that is strong. In its report last year, the commission told the Minister of Citizenship that "The Human Rights Code alone has not been enough to achieve equal participation in society by people with disabilities." It stressed the need for meaningful legislation with "teeth." The commission recommended to this government that "a regulatory approach" is needed and that "barriers should be defined more broadly than those related to physical impediments."

In any event, the party that wants to cut red tape surely can't think it is better to have a system where every barrier must be removed using a costly and time-consuming human rights process when they could be prevented with strong and effective legislation. Surely the operators of small businesses would rather know the rules ahead of time than be faced with complaints after the fact.

This government should not only pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act because it is the right thing to do and because it is good for all Ontarians; it should do so because it promised it would. In fact, during the 1995 election campaign, Mike Harris promised in writing in a letter dated May 24 that "a Harris government would be willing to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act in the first term of office...." That promise was twice reiterated and reinforced by this House through unanimous resolutions. On May 16, 1996, three and a half years ago, this House voted unanimously to pass a resolution calling on the government and the Premier to keep those promises. Then again last year, on October 29, 1998, this House unanimously passed a resolution, proposed by my colleague Dwight Duncan, repeating this commitment and approving the 11 principles that this legislation must incorporate to be strong, effective and enforceable.

Where are we today? The Premier, who got re-elected saying he keeps his promises, has had four and a half years to keep the one that almost 20% of Ontarians care about most. During that time, there have been three ministers responsible, two elections and two unanimous resolutions from this House showing strong bipartisan support for this new law. But there is no law. There is no Ontarians with Disabilities Act. None has been enacted; none is before this House.

Whatever your political stripe, whatever your feelings on this government's track record on the treatment of people with disabilities, no member can credibly vote against this resolution.

What does this resolution say? It says that an act must be passed. All three of our parties have endorsed this. It says that an act must be "enacted no later than two years from today." This government has already had four and a half years to put legislation together. It shows that it can turn legislation around overnight, though, when it wishes. Two years is more than enough time.

This resolution requires legislation to be strong and effective. Who could say no to this? Who could argue that the law should be weak and ineffective? Who could vote to keep one and a half million of Ontario's people imprisoned in prisons constructed through our own apathy?

We need to pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and we need to do that within two years from today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Stop the clock. I'd like to recognize in the members' gallery the member for Nickel Belt for the 36th Parliament, Mr Blain Morin. Welcome back.

Further debate? The member from—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Broadview-Greenwood.

The Acting Speaker: Broadview-Greenwood. How could I forget that?

Ms Churley: As a former Deputy Speaker, I understand and forgive you. I'll bet you're at home studying photographs a lot, trying to match us up with our ridings.

Let me start by saying that I am supporting, as is my whole caucus, this resolution before us today. All I can say at the outset is that I'm disappointed, as I'm sure the people who are watching this debate at this very moment are, that we're here yet again debating another resolution on the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. We have been through this. Our party, through Marion Boyd, introduced a resolution in October, 1998, which got all-party support, and furthermore, Marilyn Mushinski, the Premier's parliamentary assistant at that time, supported it. There has been a resolution, as mentioned, by the Liberal Party.

I have to say that this is one area where there's a lot of partisan politics, because that's what politics is all about in many ways, but the opposition have been working closely with persons with disabilities and the committee who have been pushing for this act for some time. Together, we've been wanting to work co-operatively with the government to make sure that a strong, effective act is passed. That's how we began after the Mike Harris promise in the 1995 election that he was going to pass such an act. We all said, "We'll support you," and we were supportive of proper consultation and coming forward with a bill.

As we all know, that is not what happened. What the government did was delay and delay and delay. Then, after some sham, by private-invitation-only consultation, they came forward with a pitiful excuse of a bill that was so embarrassing. As the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee said, it was like a kick in the stomach. That's exactly what it was after all of that. That was the best the government could do.

I want to spend a few minutes responding more to what the Premier said today in question period, because I can't tell you how disgraceful it is that the Premier continues to say over and over again, in jovial-type terms, "We're doing this, and we're doing that, and we're the only government that has had the courage to do anything," when he knows that isn't true. He knows, or he should know if he'd look at the sad history of why we are here today, that persons with disabilities have tried over the years to find the right avenue by which to make sure that their rights were upheld in Ontario. They've tried through the Constitution; they've tried through the Human Rights Commission. It was, I believe, in 1994 that the idea of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act came forward, after attempts through other avenues didn't work.

Essentially what this government has been doing is saying, "Go to the Human Rights Commission." In the meantime, they cut, for the second time in the latest round of cuts. There have been even more cuts to the Human Rights Commission, which is already backed up. That has been their answer so far.

I want to say clearly that when we were in government and were consulting with communities, including persons with disabilities communities, on what some of the biggest barriers were, it was made very clear to us that employment was a major barrier. If people have work, then they have much more likelihood of getting a roof over

their heads and having the money to achieve some of the other things that we count on in our society. So employment was one of the top priorities.

We chose, at that time, to focus on the Employment Equity Act. As you remember, we consulted for a very long time with all kinds of people across Ontario. The final act was passed, and what did this government do? One of the very first things they did—in fact, they ran on it—was to get rid of that act. They said they would replace it with something else; they didn't. They got rid of it. They wiped it out and left persons with disabilities and others who were among the target groups high and dry. They did that. They put nothing in its place. They took away the accessible transportation policies that our government had put in place. What is so disturbing and why I'm so upset today that we're standing here debating this resolution is that this government has in fact created more barriers for persons with disabilities.

1530

It's one thing to stand here and talk about the fact that Mike Harris did not keep his 1995 promise, which he made so clearly, but they have made things even worse. The Premier got up today and spoke as though they've improved things, when we had members from the committee sitting there listening to this. I can warn the Premier that he will hear back, that his remarks today were well noted. He will be hearing back; let me just leave it at that.

I don't think there's a person in Ontario who does not support moving forward on this. When the government talks about "real people"—as they did in the throne speech—they certainly do not consider persons with disabilities as some of the deserving real people in our province. It's like they're not on the radar screen as far as this government is concerned.

What they've done is a disgrace. I would say that not only those of us in this House will not stand for it, the people of Ontario will not stand for it any more. I would say to the people—through you, of course, Mr Speaker—the persons from the disabilities community who are watching this debate today, that they should know there is strong support for the disabilities act. I know they know a poll was done and it was made very clear that the people of Ontario support them.

What do we have? The bill the government put forward did not even come close to the demands of persons with disabilities who participated in the government's own hoax consultation. They made their demands heard. They fought their way into those hearings. I congratulate them for that. They forced the government to hear the principles that had to be contained in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act to really provide access. The government chose not to hear them.

The pathetic bill we keep hearing about, which they had to remove in embarrassment, had no enforcement mechanism and no penalty for failure to comply. It did nothing to address barriers to people with disabilities in the broader public sector, in municipal services and in the private sector.

I want to give you just a few examples of the barriers that exist. One of the barriers that is most disturbing, and totally unacceptable to a wealthy, caring society, is that we have disabled people living on the streets now, disabled persons who are homeless. That is such a crying disgrace. That is directly due to the policies of this government.

They've gotten rid of rent control, so rents are skyrocketing. They're not building any more affordable housing, so the waiting lists are longer and longer. They cut welfare and even though they came up with a new category for persons with disabilities, they under-resourced it, underfunded it, so it's in chaos.

Furthermore, there are people who used to get benefits who have been cut off, because their goal is to actually get people off the rolls. When we tried to find out how many people were actually on the family benefits before the new program, we couldn't get the numbers, which is interesting in itself. We will keep trying to get those numbers.

Let me give you a few examples of the barriers. Students with disabilities face incredible barriers when they try to get an education. For example, far too many of our schools are inaccessible buildings. This government's own former minister responsible for people with disabilities had planned to go to an all-candidates debate in her own riding in the last election in just such an inaccessible school building.

Limited availability of Braille and other alternative formats for print information creates barriers for people who are blind or who have visual impairment or other print disabilities. This includes information as basic as circulars about job postings, which are rarely provided in alternative formats.

As we know from Queen's Park itself, people encounter doors that are too heavy to handle. Even accessible housing designed for people using wheelchairs requires that people have significant upper-body strength, which means that some people with certain problems may be sitting out in the cold until someone comes along to help them open the door.

Let me give you one personal example of that. In my riding of Broadview-Greenwood, a Bank of Montreal, my own local bank which I use, for many years did not have a ramp. When I would go there, quite frequently there would be an elderly gentleman in a wheelchair, an elderly woman pushing him in that wheelchair and waiting patiently at the door, no matter how cold it was, until somebody, an able-bodied person, came up and opened the door to let them in. One day, after I'd helped them a few times, I spoke to them about what was going on. They told me that they had been trying to get a ramp in that bank for years and they kept being put off. I don't think it was the staff in the local bank; they were very supportive. But head office kept saying, "We have to look at our master plan and blah, blah, blah." It took a letter from me, a strong letter, to the bank saying: "Please move on this. This is the result of your inaction. If you

don't, I'm going to go public." Shortly after that, there was a ramp put in at that bank.

That's just one example, and we shouldn't have to do this piecemeal, bit by bit, when we discover when we're walking in our own ridings that there are disabled people waiting for an able-bodied person to come along and open the door. The kind of act that we're talking about today, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, would mean that those kinds of situations wouldn't happen. That's pretty basic, isn't it?

I want to end by talking briefly about government waste and red tape. The government's failure to put in place a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act has wasted time and resources and those hard-earned taxpayer dollars that they are always talking about. As I said earlier today, the government seems very clear that they want to cut red tape for everybody else, it seems, particularly business in Ontario. They're cutting red tape, or attempting to, although some of their cutting of red tape gets them into trouble because they don't think it through. That's another story for another time. But what is really disturbing is that, as they do all of this cutting of red tape and push through bill after bill after bill in this House, they can't find the time and they can't make the commitment to put forward an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which frankly, in my view, doesn't need further consultation. However, because the government, in the last term, didn't consult with people and because the minister, who is here today, did say that she was open to consultation, real consultation—although we're very worried now. Today, a couple of months afterwards, we hear that there has been no follow-up and the minister now seems to be consulting privately about how to consult.

Minister, let me say to you that in committee rooms 1 and 2 right now are many people associated with, involved with this committee, and have been for years, who are here today, any time, to assist you in getting this act in the House. The resolution before us today gives you two years. Who could not support that? Personally, I don't believe it should take another two years, because every day that goes by that we don't pass this act means that more people are experiencing health problems and accessibility problems in all walks of life that they shouldn't have to.

What I would like to see happen today, once and for all, is for the minister to get up and tell us, not only that she supports this resolution but that she is coming into the House before we break for Christmas with a strong act that we can take a look at and have committee hearings on and go out there and get on with it.

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Enough is enough. These people who are here today and who have been involved since 1994 in trying to get this going, have seen accesses taken away since this government came to power. They've seen things get worse for them. It's not just me saying that. Speak to the people who are here themselves today, Minister. They will tell you that. That's where we're hearing it from. We

see the results of your cutting and your policies. The time is now. The government made the promise pre-election in 1995. So far they have been silent and done nothing except bring forward a bill which was a disgrace, which embarrassed them and embarrassed us all.

Hopefully we will not have to come back here with yet another resolution a few months from now or a year from now, but the minister will commit today to meet with those people who are sitting here—they're accessible to her today; they're sitting in those two rooms—to get input to start the consultation if that's what she wants to do and just get on with it. No more excuses, as the Premier gave today. He's the Premier, you're the government and you're the ones who made this promise in 1995. Other governments before you have done things to increase accessibility. This government has taken those away. They have the opportunity today to remedy all that.

I would ask the minister if she would come forward today and tell us that is exactly what she is going to do.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I am pleased to have the opportunity today to rise and participate in this important discussion that's affecting persons with disabilities throughout the province.

I will be sharing my time and will be speaking for a very short period of time as a result of so many of my colleagues wanting to be involved and on the record with this debate.

This topic is of interest for all Ontarians, but before I begin, I would like to address the rhetoric that happened today in the House from the two opposition parties.

To be quite truthful, I'm a little surprised that the Liberals and the NDP are all so ready to add empty bluster to their words. Oh, there are the cries of outrage from the opposition benches and there are the cries of anger, but mostly there are the empty cries of opposition parties that failed to attempt to come up with their own legislation.

We are here to debate a resolution that demands that within two years this government table strong and effective legislation to remove barriers for the disabled community. Frankly, I don't know why the Liberals are in such a hurry. They certainly weren't in that hurry when they formed the government under David Peterson.

The Liberals continue to be all over the road when it comes to this issue. Today I have in my hand a letter to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee signed by the Leader of the Opposition. It reveals the timeline the Liberals agreed to when they were going to enact legislation for an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It reads, "Our goal is to complete this work during the first three years of our mandate." Wait. It doesn't say, "two years," it says, "three years."

Yet today the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London proposes a resolution that calls for legislation in two years. I know that the question of leadership has been a distraction for the Liberal members of late and I would just like to know which member is really speaking for the

Liberal party. There's a lack of leadership in the Liberal Party of Ontario and I fear they're just not up to the job.

The NDP is no better, I have to admit. In the third session of the 35th Legislature, one of their members introduced Bill 168. This was a private member's bill called the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This happened in 1994.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The minister referenced a letter from our leader with respect to the ODA. He's not here to make sure that his words were correctly interpreted. She did not cite the date, which was seven months ago, so in fact the opposition is on time and the minister, in my view, has misled the House.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order and I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr Duncan: I would withdraw it and say that it does not accurately reflect—

The Acting Speaker: Just withdraw the comment.

Mr Duncan: I withdraw the comment.

Interjection: Read the letter again.

Hon Mrs Johns: "Our goal is to complete this work during the first three years of our mandate."

I was talking about the NDP, and in the third session of the 35th Legislature they introduced Bill 168, a private member's bill. The NDP was so committed to this legislation that it didn't even pass second reading—not even second reading. They could have moved it up on the legislative calendar.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Johns: I'm obviously touching a nerve here. It's beautiful to see.

They could have moved it up on the legislative calendar. They could have shown that they would match their calls for social justice with legislative action. But sadly, they did not. Instead today they're howling for action when they could have produced it themselves. The government of Ontario will produce action as a benefit for people with disabilities in this province.

In our communities, in our public institutions, in our workplaces, we are all striving to reduce and to eliminate barriers that limit participation.

I believe that all of us here today share a common goal actually: to create opportunities for all members of Ontario society. That is why I continue to meet with and listen to individuals and groups that have ideas or opinions on how to achieve this goal.

While I'm proud that this government was the first in Canada to introduce the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, debate in this House and concerns expressed by people from the disability community made it very clear to the government that additional consultation and planning were required before we proceeded.

Earlier this fall, the speech from the throne recognized this government's commitment to further consultation and to moving forward with a new action plan during this session. But I think it's important to recognize—and I know from the people I've been talking to within the disabled community—that legislation is only part of the

picture here today. In Ontario we have already made considerable progress and we can build on that progress. Our new action plan will continue to build on this progress. It will build upon the progress that has been made by all of those who had a stake and responsibility in making Ontario more accessible and creating more opportunities for all members of our society.

We all understand that there is a great deal more to be done, and nobody in this House refutes that, but the advances that have been made are certainly significant and they inspire all of us as we look forward to the future.

Through advances in public policy and through dedicated financial resources, our public institutions and services in the community are becoming more accessible. Investment in new technology has improved access to information, communication and learning.

This year, our community access-ability program is supporting the work of approximately 200 community partners working together towards a barrier removal project—partners from the not-for-profit sector, the business community and the municipalities.

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Business and industry have also made advances. They have recognized that making workplaces accessible to people who want to work makes very good business sense. They are recognizing that persons with disabilities are productive and industrious, given the opportunity to compete in the workforce and in our economy.

I and my colleagues on this side of the House are very proud of the many advancements that have been made for people with disabilities by this government since 1995. We have announced more than \$500 million in spending on disabilities programs. The government's economic policies and achievements have resulted in record job creation. In fact, 615,000 new jobs have been created for Ontarians since this government took place in 1995. Without job creation, employment programs cannot and will not work. Without job creation, barriers to employment are truly insurmountable, and we need to break down barriers.

There are many stories to be told, and today I am very pleased that we have the opportunity to consider both our achievements and the important next steps as we continue to move to create opportunities for absolutely every member in our society.

Like many people in Ontario, I believe that we can work together and, working together, we can create important advances in many areas. I believe that the private sector, the broader public sector, the voluntary sector, persons with disabilities and those who advocate on behalf of the disabled community are all prepared to work with the government to make further advances for Ontarians with disabilities.

We are committed to the principle of eliminating barriers, not because they extend the hand of charity; indeed, they allow us to take our places at the table of humankind, at the table where our seats are marked by the true spirit of fraternity. We know that only then can

we enjoy the great bounty of a province that celebrates its equality.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I've worked with disabled children and their families for 20 years, and I'm proud to support my colleague's important motion.

Of all of the actions of this government from 1995 to 1999, the draft of their Ontarians with Disabilities Act was definitely the hardest one to accept. It was a sham. Everyone knew it; they even knew it. It was a blessing that it did not pass. In effect, the provincial government attempted to wash its hands of the responsibility for the disabled.

I have three issues to bring forward in this short time: the first is stressing the need for appropriate funding for disabled children in the school system; the second is a property tax issue with the disabled; and the third is operational in nature and has to do with the assistance for the disabled, specifically the inefficiency of ODSP, the Ontario disability support program.

Seven years ago in Hamilton, the psychology department ran an outcome study regarding the progress of our disabled students. The results were promising. The majority graduated from secondary schools from regular programs, and 50% went on to college and university. This was a vast improvement from over 20 years ago, when the majority dropped out of school at the age of 16 and/or were institutionalized. With the recent cuts to the education system, the parents of children entering the system today are worried that their children will not be able to have these outcomes.

There is an important link between appropriate educational opportunities for the disabled and an act that embodies principles that are just. The lack of this education is a barrier and does not provide for equal opportunity and full participation in the life of the disabled.

The second issue is a property tax issue. I hope that we consider, all of us, granting property tax breaks to people who build new homes for disabled members. Not all existing homes can be modified for accessibility. There isn't enough time to go into this in detail, but it is a major issue for the disabled.

Now we go to the ODSP office. Next to the FRO, the ODSP office is the most frustrating. In a general sense, the problem with ODSP is that on the application it states that one should get a reply in four to six weeks. In reality, it is four to six months if you are lucky. Then, once a person goes to the pains of being deemed disabled, there is something wrong in the system between when the decision is made, from the disabilities adjudication unit, to the local office in getting the benefits to the disabled.

One case I had was Judy. She was deemed disabled on January 29, 1998. She phoned our office on October 7 because she was getting the runaround and no one in Hamilton knew that she was accepted because it didn't show on the system. My constituent assistant phoned a supervisor, who told her the same thing. She then called ODSP, which told her that a certain code was on the file and that was a problem. That wasn't true. She just

recently got an appointment with the counsellor to see if she qualifies for income. This is totally unacceptable. We have spoken with two supervisors on the general problem and they concur that the system is horrible and has to be improved.

Another case: Jason received his forms on July 9. He still hasn't received any money for his disability. These aren't people who are fortunate like us. They need this money to survive. The ODSP has to be looked at.

I would also like to challenge the minister, given that she has said we can all work together, to go down and speak with the 300 people in committee rooms 1 and 2. Tell them how we can all work together to make their lives easier, to give them the rights that we all have in Ontario.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): It is a pleasure for me to rise this afternoon and participate in this very important discussion about issues affecting Ontarians with disabilities.

Not only for those who are personally struggling with their disabilities, this is an issue that affects families, their friends, our communities as a whole. Disability issues are important to institutions and to businesses all across this province that provide services to all Ontarians.

Issues affecting people who live with disabilities in our community are important to this government and important to all of us. I want to emphasize that this government is committed to promoting opportunities for people with disabilities, and the minister is continuing to meet with interested parties. We are committed to seeking further input on this initiative, with a goal to introduce a new action plan this session.

In the lead-up to the 1995 election, we listened closely to Ontarians. In fact, our major election document, the Common Sense Revolution, was based on the advice of ordinary Ontarians. The Premier was listening closely to the people of Ontario, who indicated they wanted some sort of disability legislation, and we took action.

Clearly, the advice we received when that legislation was introduced was that further consultation was needed. Again, we are listening and further consultation is underway, with an eye to altering that original legislation.

But just as we promised in the last election that at some point in our term of government we would balance the budget, that we would reduce the \$11.4-billion deficit down to a balanced budget and that we would reduce taxes, the people of Ontario have come to know that we keep our promises. We have reduced taxes 99 times—far different from our colleagues across the way, who increased taxes 65 times. The people of Ontario in the last election not only recognized that we keep our promises, but appreciated that and returned us to government.

We have already taken significant advances to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities and to create opportunities for all members of our society. This government has already announced over half a billion dollars for disability programs since taking office in 1995.

I would like to take the opportunity today to inform the House of some of these very important initiatives. Our government has taken action to improve the transportation needs of the disabled by supporting building and motor vehicle modifications. An Ontario retail sales tax exemption provides an exemption of sales tax paid on purchases of motor vehicles for those who are disabled.

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As well, we know very clearly that those who are disabled want to be as independent as possible. We are enhancing community living and independent living facilities instead of requiring those who are disabled to be in institutions. We are helping students who have disabilities, from preschool right through to post-secondary education. We are implementing a new income support and employment program that better meets the needs of persons with disabilities. And we have established tax relief measures, including tax relief for low-income property owners with disabilities and tax credits for individuals with disabilities to help them get jobs and, of course, to help accommodate employers who modify their workplaces to meet the needs of their disabled employees.

Before I go further to discuss the initiatives our government has undertaken to help those in our disabled community, I think it's very important, because we are today debating a motion on an opposition day, to be sure that all members of the House, and those who may be watching us, understand what all the parties have stood for on this very important issue. I examined the election platforms of both the Liberal Party and the NDP prior to the last election and, interestingly enough, despite what you might have understood from the rhetoric today in the House, neither one of them had any position iterated in their election platforms. Absolutely nothing in the 20/20 Plan and nothing in the election document of the NDP.

This was particularly unusual for the NDP because in their administration they had enacted the employment equity legislation, which was of course the law that required Ontarians to have job quota laws. People overwhelmingly voted against this because the people of Ontario, and rightly so, supported by our government, support the idea of promotion based on ability and merit, not on quota.

I think it's very important that this is clearly in everyone's mind as we debate this issue today. We not only made a promise through the Premier, but we in fact introduced legislation. That is being refined. Our government did what we promised, and clearly we will be doing this again. Our actions have spoken louder than empty words.

As I said, we have undertaken initiatives since 1995 to spend over \$500 million in new spending on various disabled programs. This year the government announced a \$2-million partnership between the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ontario March of Dimes to deliver a new home and vehicle modification program for adults with physical disabilities. This program is offered in 60 locations across the province. Just

this past week I had a constituent visit my office who will receive over \$12,000 for modifications to their home.

The Human Rights Commission was mentioned earlier. In 1995 the waiting list was 28 months on average for cases to be heard. That has been greatly reduced, because we know that is so very important for people seeking redress through that commission.

In the area of community living and independent living, we have made important progress. Disabled individuals often require specialized care. In 1996 the Ministry of Community and Social Services announced a four-year plan to provide community living opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. This includes \$60 million annually for local community agencies to develop and provide services in the area of community living.

This is interesting, because in 1997, in addition to that \$60 million, an additional \$15 million was added to support adults and children with developmental disabilities in the community. In 1998 that was increased to \$18 million a year, and in 1999 an additional \$35 million in new resources over and above the \$60 million was added for additional support and programs to help persons with developmental disabilities live in our communities. We are putting major investments in place.

New resources are also being allocated for people with physical disabilities living in the community. The Ministry of Health announced an important and innovative new program that enhances the independence of adults with physical disabilities by allowing them to manage their own support services and attendant services. This \$18.7-million attendant program provides people with greater flexibility, choice and control over the services they receive. It also results, from the government's point of view, in a more efficient use of health care resources.

I actually have a constituent by the name of Rick Goy who uses this program, and from the very first time I was elected has been a great supporter of this. He was very pleased our government took this on and made such a tremendous investment in it. He's very pleased because it provides him with independence, with control and with freedom, for the attendant in fact is his employee. He's very supportive of the strong stance our government has taken in this regard.

We have also invested a tremendous amount in health care dollars to provide services that would allow patients who have suffered brain injuries to return home to their families and communities here in Ontario; \$8.4 million is spent in this program. Again, one of the very first constituents I ever met when I was elected was from a family who had a brain-injured person. They were pleading with us to find a way to have this person return to the family and the community, and were thrilled, quite frankly, when we made this large investment. Their family member has been returned now for several years and is receiving care close to home. This means a lot for families, particularly when a disability is involved; it's so much better to be near to those who have a special concern for them.

In 1997, the Ministry of Health committed to a five-year, \$25-million contribution to match the money raised by the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation for research into spinal cord and brain injuries. Of course, this is a personal commitment of Rick Hansen, who's worked all across Canada to make sure this is an issue at the top of the mind for many people.

Through a joint initiative with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and in coordination with education and social services, we are expanding programs for pre-school children who have medically based speech and language disorders.

Students are also benefiting from a new program we enacted, a \$30-million, five-year project called Task Force on Learning Opportunities. Big words, but what it really means is seven pilot projects that have been undertaken to help students with learning disabilities to make the transition from high school to post-secondary school.

I'm proud to say that my own local university, the University of Guelph, is involved in this pilot project. To quote Maclean's magazine, which ran an article on September 13 of this year, this is an excellent program that helps "professors teaching first-year courses adapt their methods" to assist the learning disabled. This program is funded by our government; 13 schools are involved, 400 students. We're very excited about it. In fact, one of the things noted in this article is that Ontario is a leader in this area. Other provinces like Alberta are watching it very closely. It's one of the most formalized programs. So they're expecting wonderful results from this program.

We've had major program and funding announcements to assist children with disabilities and their families. This includes \$20 million in annual mental health services and \$5 million, increasing to \$19 million for intensive early intervention for two- to five-year olds whose children suffer from autism. This is very welcome in my riding and in the area of Waterloo. We actually had a group of parents who organized to bring this very important issue to my attention. They were most pleased with our government's actions in this area.

As well, we've recognized that care for medically fragile or technologically dependent children is very important; \$17 million, which will serve up to 1,700 families has been earmarked for this program.

It's very important that employment opportunities are available to those who are willing and able to work. That's why our government introduced a program called the workplace accessibility tax incentive. Under this, Ontario businesses are able to offset the costs of support services and physical accommodations when they hire new employees who have disabilities. We estimate this will cost about \$7 million per year, but it's worth every penny. As you know, creating jobs is important to our government. We've already created almost 650,000 new jobs. Our original plan over five years is 725,000, 825,000 the year after.

We're very pleased to see the Ontario economy booming, and if we can find ways to allow the disabled

to be more and more part of our employment community, that makes us all very happy.

The employment supports program provided under the Ontario disability support program was established in 1999. This program will double the funding for persons with disabilities from \$18 million to \$35 million. This is a program that was long discussed prior to the election. We've received quite a bit of support for this program. What it did was move people off the welfare system into a program more specifically designed to meet their needs. I'd just like to mention some of the things that are hallmarks of this program. For instance, we removed the label of "permanently unemployable" and recognized that many people do, are able and want to work.

We reinstated disability benefits if a job attempt failed. We no longer require individuals with disabilities to go through eligibility testing every one or two years except in cases where their condition is expected to improve. We allow people to keep more of their assets and benefits from gifts and inheritances from their parents and from their families. We provide individualized employment planning which assists people with technological aids and devices so they can secure and maintain employment.

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This was something that was wanted by many prior to the election. It had been requested during the administrations before us. Interestingly enough, it was not supported by the Liberal caucus and I was very pleased to see our government take action on this file and to separate the welfare program from the disability program.

Last spring we also introduced the partners enabling change program, which is an important part of our initiative. This is about \$800,000 to support strategic alliances with businesses, not-for-profits and broader public sectors, to begin to undertake new programs that will have assistance for Ontarians with disabilities.

One of the groups that I think every government quite frankly is obligated to assist in any way possible is the group that we call the vulnerable adults, particularly those with disabilities. We've been pleased to fund 123 community projects to strengthen local co-ordination and partnerships among those working on behalf of vulnerable adults. We've also increased funding to enhance access for women with disabilities to domestic violence court. The violence against women with a disability prevention education grant program provides \$1 million annually for various community programs across the province that address the issue of abuse of women with disabilities.

Something that's often forgotten in the programs to do with disabled is the Good Neighbours program, which assists in developing informal support networks at the broad community level. This is a program that assists not only those who are disabled but seniors and others who are vulnerable and in need of assistance.

We have a broad range of new and enhanced initiatives that translate into personal stories of better accessibility, of greater independence and of new promise for

people in all parts of this province. These programs and new resources are providing access where before there were barriers. They are helping people with disabilities to participate and become more productive. They are making new opportunities and greater independence a reality in the communities in every part of the province.

We are committed. We have said over and over that we understand not everyone in Ontario starts with an equal opportunity in life. But we have moved, for instance, to take people with disabilities off the welfare rolls and into programs specifically designed to meet their needs. We have streamlined the Ontario Human Rights Commission and now 72% of cases, and this is interesting, are now resolved by up-front remediation and mediation, as opposed to having to go through long court cases that could last up to 18 or 36 months.

Our government is the first in Ontario's history to have the courage to introduce a law which would have required, by the way, every government ministry and agency to review its policies and operating practices in order to remove barriers to employment and service for disabled citizens. It wasn't perfect, but it was a wonderful start. It was the first, it was the best and it was quite comprehensive. Because of concerns expressed, we did withdraw the bill and we are consulting further on improvements before reintroducing an action plan.

What is important is that we did have the courage to act on our principles and we are working to develop a new action plan. I might say though that one of the things we do have to consider as we're under way is that in the development of any legislation or any action plan the people of Ontario and my colleagues would know that we established something called the Red Tape Commission. This was established to reduce needless red tape for businesses and institutions that provide service and carry on activities across the province of Ontario. Former governments added layer upon layer of red tape, tax upon tax. In fact, former governments added 65 total taxes. We responded to the people of Ontario by trying to find ways to reduce unnecessary red tape, and that's important in all the legislation and policies they undertake, no matter what file. This can be a crushing burden for small businesses particularly.

Some have suggested that an act like the American disabilities act, for instance, creates a great deal of red tape. More manageable red tape is not the way we want to go. If that in fact is a consequence, it's not something we want. It's not something we would want to introduce if unnecessary. This is important, not just to a business community but to the disabled as well, because if time is spent, resources are spent on unnecessary red tape, no one's objectives are accomplished. A prosperous economy, business taxes and the taxes that employees pay are what allow our government to provide the services we all want to provide across this province, whether they be for health, for the disabled communities or others.

As we approach a new millennium, we pause to take stock of our achievements just as we surely look to the future. Today, Ontario is indeed a better place for people

living with disabilities, better than it has been before in our history, but we acknowledge there is a great deal more to be done. As Minister Johns stated earlier this afternoon, we all have an important role to play in the ongoing task of eliminating barriers that limit participation. We look forward to this important task of creating opportunities for all members of our society.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to rise in support of the resolution by my colleague the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London.

The sad part in all of this is that we're here today still debating this issue. The reality of the situation is that if Mike Harris and the Conservative government had kept the promise they made in 1995, we would not be here supporting another resolution, trying to again force this government to deal with the issues of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, a meaningful act.

In the last term we saw this government take great pride in what they did on this. The promise in the Common Sense Revolution was clear. You said that within four years, within your first mandate, you would bring in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. What did you do? You went through this process of public consultation, you went through the process of talking to people across Ontario, you consulted. The problem was you did not listen and your bill reflected that.

Clearly, we had a bill that was an absolute sham. It was a joke. It was universally condemned by the disabled community. You could not find any credible spokesperson at all to suggest there was anything worthwhile in that bill. Now you go back and say, "We're going to consult further." You consulted all you had to. All you had to do was listen to Ontarians who were disabled, listen to their views, listen to their suggestions and you would have had a decent bill. It was a disgraceful performance by this government. It was a clear betrayal of the disabled community four years ago. The disabled community does not believe and trust this government now, after their actions. They believed in 1995 that Mike Harris was sincere about bringing in meaningful legislation. They trusted you. They trusted your process of consultation. What did you do? You turned around and simply betrayed and denied the disabled community a basic right that we expect for all Ontarians. You have failed miserably.

This resolution today sets a clear timeline to bring in a meaningful piece of legislation. What did this government say? We heard the two previous speakers go on and on about all these government programs and all this rhetoric in regard to what this government has done for the disabled community. What you have done in dealing with this ODA is nothing more than a pure betrayal of the principles that we believe in, in this province: the principle of equality and the principle of fairness. Now you stand here and talk about something called an action plan. You're going to bring out an action plan. You had the opportunity.

The problem is very clear: The political will is not there. This government does not have the political will to

help the disabled community. This government cannot stand up to the few out there who criticized them for bringing in this legislation. You don't have the guts to do it. You can bring in squeeze kid legislation in a week. You can ram everything else through this House in a month or two months and bring in 50 or 60 bills and get them through, but in five years you have not had the courage to bring in a meaningful piece of legislation to deal with the disabled community and bring us in line with what the Americans did, frankly, well over 10 years ago—15 years ago. That's all we're doing here, and you have failed. Why should the disabled community trust you today? Why should we trust this government when they promise anything to do with this? You have let them down once. You're going to let them down again.

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We made it clear during the campaign we would act on this. This resolution today by my colleague Mr Peters brings that in line. We've had two speakers from the government, but you know what? Not one of them has yet stood up and said whether they're going to support this resolution that's in front of us. Two speakers have spoken for well over half an hour on behalf of the government. Not one has yet said if they're going to support this resolution.

I would ask and challenge the minister, every member of the House on the government side, the members sitting here, to go down to rooms 1 and 2. Look at the disabled community and ask them very clearly if they feel that you betrayed them. Ask them. I challenge the minister to go. If the minister is sitting in the House, as she is, I would ask her to take five minutes, go down to rooms 1 and 2 and speak to the community. Let's see if you have the courage to meet them face to face and tell them why you betrayed them four years ago and tell them why all we have is an action plan and no real help for the disabled community.

I urge the House today to support this resolution. I ask this government to carry through on the commitment you made four years ago. There have been enough betrayals; there have been enough letdowns; there's been enough disappointment. The community worked with you. They consulted. They spoke to you. They gave you ideas. What you gave them is the back of your hand. It was an absolute disgrace. You should be ashamed of yourself. You have betrayed the disabled community, to no end. It is now time to act. I ask this government to vote in support of this. Bring in some meaningful legislation and bring Ontario on a par with the rest of North America when it comes to dealing with the disabled community.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak today about this very important topic. We have heard a great deal today about Ontarians with disabilities. We have heard from the opposition their concerns about disabilities, the Ontarians with disabilities being serviced.

I would like to remind the Liberals of the letter that was put forth by their leader, Dalton McGuinty, and I quote from the letter: "Our goal is to complete this work

during the first three years of our mandate." Well, they did not complete it in the first three years. Now they've put a resolution forward for us to implement it in the next two years.

The previous government, the NDP government, put forth Bill 168, which didn't go anywhere. This government has the courage to do what needs to be done and to serve Ontarians with disabilities. This government is very supportive of Ontarians with disabilities. We have a range of new services and initiatives that this government has undertaken since taking office in 1995, new services and initiatives amounting to more than \$500 million.

Today I would like to provide members with a sense of what this means to local communities all over Ontario. To illustrate my point, I'm going to talk about just one of our many programs and what this program means for people and communities across this province. This government's community access-ability program, which was mentioned by the minister earlier in her speech, was announced in November 1998. The community access-ability program encourages community partners, such as not-for-profit organizations, local businesses, service organizations and clubs and persons with disabilities, to work together to make their communities more accessible. Community access-ability also supports community education about the barriers faced by persons with disabilities, including physical, communication-related and attitudinal barriers and shows how to prevent and remove these barriers.

The community access-ability program provides project grants up to \$5,000 to match financial and in-kind support from the community. In every case, tangible community support is a prerequisite to project funding. This year, 18% of overall project funding will come from private sector sources. In the first six months of this program, there are almost 200 organizations working co-operatively in communities across the province on barrier-removal projects that respond directly to needs identified by the community. It is a program which is creating tangible results.

This year community access-ability projects will directly involve more than 3,000 persons with disabilities in the planning, development and implementation of these projects. Thirty-two community access-ability sponsored events will be staged in communities across the province, ranging from conferences to artistic events. More than 600 community access-ability sponsored workshops will be conducted which will provide information, orientation and specialized training for persons with disabilities and help raise awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities and the services available in the community. More than 10,000 people are expected to attend or participate in the community access-ability sponsored events, conferences and workshops, and more than 20,000 pieces of information will be produced and distributed as a result of community access-ability projects.

However, as I said a moment ago, I want to focus on what this important and innovative program means

locally. In communities all over Ontario, the government has been asked to assist, and we are responding directly to community needs. For the Windsor and Essex County Transportation and Coordination Centre, it means additional resources for the promotion and advertising of their services assisting persons with disabilities, and others, with their transportation needs. In that same community, the Victorian Order of Nurses is working co-operatively with the Windsor Chamber of Commerce on a community access-ability project that will help to implement a voluntary access-ability survey and a complete physical access-ability checklist for local businesses.

In Kitchener, the Canadian Hearing Society and the Kitchener Public Library are working together to deliver educational workshops for an estimated 320 participants. These are workshops for and about persons with disabilities in Kitchener and the surrounding area. The workshops will focus on barrier removal, needs awareness and information about local services and resources available in the area.

In the London area, Participation House Support Services will develop a manual using peer trainers to assist young adults with multiple disabilities to become more independent. This innovative pilot will begin by training young adults who will, in turn, provide training to an anticipated 100 participants.

In southwestern Ontario, the community has looked to the government for partnership, and community access-ability was able to answer that request.

Here in Toronto community access-ability is helping the Toronto Association for Community Living to create a Toronto chapter of Youth Involvement Ontario, which is a partnership between youth with disabilities and youth without disabilities.

The Brain Injury Association of Toronto is working with Toronto's parks and recreation department and Brain Injury Rehabilitation Inc to develop and deliver a pilot project to integrate individuals with brain injury into recreational and social activities in that community. Peer volunteer program leaders will be trained to operate the program on an ongoing basis.

Transportation Action Now of Toronto, in a partnership with the Bloorview MacMillan Centre and the Canadian Paraplegic Association, will develop a new information bulletin to assist drivers with disabilities to find answers and learn about options, components and devices that are available.

In my own riding of Thornhill, the community access-ability program helped the Reena Foundation in funding their international conference on developmental disabilities. Over 300 people attended this conference celebrating achievements in the field of developmental disabilities and sharing information on social, technical and medical achievements and innovation.

Organizations in Toronto and the GTA have asked the government for support, and they are receiving the support they requested.

In Peterborough, the Canadian Mental Health Association, together with five other partners in the commu-

nity, will provide a series of workshops to train people with mental health disabilities to deliver employment readiness and life-skill workshops to other persons in the community with mental health disabilities.

The Tayside Community Residential and Support Options will use a community access-ability grant to provide leadership training to youth on all aspects of living with disabilities. These young leaders will be able to share their knowledge with other young people of all ages through presentations in schools.

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In southeastern Ontario, communities have asked the government to work in partnership, and community access-ability is making those partnerships a reality.

The Canadian Hearing Society in North Bay is participating in community access-ability by developing and implementing a community awareness campaign. One hundred front-line staff from participating agencies will develop and deliver presentations and distribute information packages to local businesses, institutions and community organizations in the Nipissing area.

The Physically Handicapped Adults Rehabilitation Association in North Bay is also putting community access-ability to work. This organization, along with five other partners in the community, will develop and distribute a new employment resource booklet entitled Plain Talk. The booklet discusses the employment services and supports available for persons with disabilities in North Bay. The booklet, which will be introduced in alternative formats, will help to improve access to employment information for persons with disabilities and employers.

Persons United for Self-Help in Northwestern Ontario, or PUSH Northwest, is developing a resource guide with the assistance of a community access-ability grant. The guide will explain how to remove access barriers and establish barrier-free designs in buildings and public locations. Some 1,500 copies of the guide will be distributed to persons with disabilities, families, caregivers, businesses and the public.

In Thunder Bay, with support from community access-ability, the Independent Living Resource Centre is organizing Celebrating Ability, a one-day arts and crafts show in February 2000 that will showcase the talent of 30 local artists and craftspersons with disabilities.

In northern Ontario, community access-ability is supporting important partnerships in the community. Community access-ability is also supporting the effective use of technology. The program is assisting the Niagara Centre for Independent Living to complete the development and launch of a Web site to provide information about accessibility to residents and tourists visiting the Niagara region. The new accessible Niagara Web site will list and provide information about all accessible attractions, businesses and community services in the area.

In Stoney Creek, the Disabled and Aged Regional Transit System, or DARTS, is leading public transit travel training with the assistance of community access-ability funding. This training will allow individuals with

physical disabilities to learn how to use the regular transit system. The project will provide the level of individual training, coaching and support that each participant needs in order to make the transition from parallel transportation to the regular transit system.

In south-central Ontario, community access-ability is responding directly to requests from the community for the government to participate in important new initiatives. I have provided just a sample of these important community projects. These projects reflect new partnerships, leadership in the community, and the ongoing commitment of Ontario's disability organizations to working together to remove barriers to accessibility.

I'm very excited about this kind of programming. Community access-ability mobilizes community resources, including private sector support. It engages persons with disabilities in determining the kinds of supports and services that are appropriate in their communities. It also supports activities in the community that address barriers to participation and create new opportunities for Ontarians with disabilities.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): It's a great pleasure for me to have a chance today to participate in the debate on the resolution brought forward by my seatmate, the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London. One more time on behalf of the Liberal Party, I challenge the minister to spend a little time, if she's half as good as she thinks she is by the speech she gave earlier, go down to the committee rooms and meet with the 200 people who have come from across this province because they think this is an important matter. Madam Minister, these are your constituents in your ministry. Earn that extra pay packet: Go downstairs and talk to these constituents in a very direct way.

She refuses to do so, I believe because this is one more example of narrowcasting on behalf of this government—that term coined by pollsters which essentially says as long as policies appeal to an electoral majority, then damn the rest. That is nothing short of an act of discrimination. The government of Ontario, by its very own policies, is a government for the few. They reflect that today in the way they reject this motion and moving forward on this item, that matters to 1.5 million Ontarians. There's no commitment to help those who struggle against bigger barriers, who have less.

I wanted to speak about the Ontarians with Disabilities Act today and to approach it on a very personal basis. In the members' gallery today is someone who works for me: Doreen Winkler. Doreen is a social worker. She lives in my riding. She was appointed to the immigration and refugee board by then Prime Minister Mulroney and reappointed by Prime Minister Chrétien. Doreen Winkler happens to be blind. We met during the election, when she came to lobby me on behalf of Ontarians with disabilities, because your government had failed to live up to the commitments it made then. Since I hired her and she began to work here in the legislative precinct, we've run fully into the problem that exists. In the broader Ontario government service, there are access funds avail-

able to managers who would seek to hire employees with disabilities, but alas, here in the Legislature of Ontario, with its budget of something like \$100 million, if I have the numbers right, there are no funds available to assist with computers that will read information that's on the screens, to assist with scanners or to hire readers who can help to get past the barriers that those who are visually impaired are dealing with.

I think this resolution today is something that can be supported by all. The time frames within it give the government a chance to act. I encourage them to support it, but I also encourage all members to speak to the House leader of their party to get to the point that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario is able to say that we have the same ability, as managers and as employers, to hire people and to access funds that will assist us in employing people and assist them in getting past the barriers that exist for them. Vote for the resolution.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I'm very pleased to add my voice to the opposition day debate and to call on all members of the Legislature to support my colleague Steve Peters's resolution that a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act should be enacted no later than two years from today. The truth is that we shouldn't even be having this debate today. Had Mike Harris kept his word to the people of Ontario and enacted legislation during his first term in office, as he had promised, our party would not be putting forward a resolution today.

Having said that, we are proud to be taking the lead on this very important issue once again, an issue that is about equality and fairness and one that we will not and cannot allow to be ignored by this government.

I'm also very proud that the disabled community in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario is at the forefront of this fight for equality. Today in Thunder Bay, Persons United for Self-Help, PUSH Northwest, is leading the charge in support of our party's resolution this afternoon. The message I want to send to everyone back home and everyone else who has fought for the passage of meaningful disability act legislation is that your support continues to inspire us to press forward, to press this government to meet this commitment. All of us in this Legislature will be ultimately judged by our commitment to true equality in this province. Today, 1.5 million Ontarians with disabilities are counting on us to make a barrier-free Ontario a reality for them. That is what we must do.

This debate is not about ideology. It is simply about holding the government to its commitment to establish an ODA and to take some action towards respecting the rights and equality of persons with disabilities in Ontario. It's about reaffirming our belief that the barriers, whether social, economic, physical, educational or vocational, are unjust and that it is incumbent upon this government to take the needed steps to remove them and to prevent the erection of new ones.

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Quite simply, it's about respecting the dignity of persons with disabilities, people who should enjoy equal opportunity and full participation in the life of our province and share its prosperity.

On behalf of the constituents of the Thunder Bay-Superior North riding, I will be proudly supporting my colleague's resolution this afternoon. I implore all members of the House, particularly on the government side, to stand in their place today, look deep within their hearts and cast a vote today for equality and fairness.

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Permettez-moi d'abord de féliciter mon collègue de Elgin-Middlesex-London pour son travail sur ce dossier clé. Chapeau, cher collègue, pour tes efforts.

We have been waiting five years for legislation for Ontarians with disabilities. The groundwork has been done in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee. What is this government waiting for to enact legislation?

Nous parlons aujourd'hui de l'absence d'une loi qui a comme but la protection des droits des Ontariennes et des Ontariens handicapés. Je suis profondément déçue que le gouvernement conservateur n'a toujours pas agi dans ce dossier. Nous sommes des législateurs et il est de notre devoir d'assurer la pleine protection des plus défavorisés et des plus démunis dans notre société. Il incombe au gouvernement de démontrer du leadership et d'assurer pleinement cette responsabilité primordiale.

La situation devient de plus en plus lamentable. D'un côté, le gouvernement parle d'une province pour tous les Ontariens. De l'autre, il coupe les subventions et les programmes destinés aux personnes handicapées. Il restreint leur accès à une pension. Il ne présente aucun projet de loi visant à éliminer des barrières et obstacles afin de permettre à ces mêmes Ontariens et Ontariennes de participer pleinement à la vie et de contribuer ainsi à la société ontarienne.

Two issues concern me particularly. They are universal access and the unreasonable delays in obtaining a response from the Ontario disability support program. Lately, I have received about 20 calls from constituents regarding the delays in obtaining support through the program. Let me remind the government that these calls are made by people, human beings who need help. These people are not cases, nor are they files or reference numbers. They are people like you and me.

While doing my best to help these people, I learned that the standard response times established by the program are not met because of bureaucratic hoop-jumping that can last from six to eight months. Ironically, the government created the new program in order to reduce delays.

As I stated earlier, I am also concerned about the issue of universal access. Let me tell you about one of my constituents, who is in a wheelchair. Lately, he could not obtain medical treatment in two separate clinics in Ottawa-Vanier because he could not climb the single step at the entrances of these clinics.

Following this distressing experience, he contacted two provincial offices regarding the lack of access to the medical clinics. Representatives in both offices told him that access is a municipal responsibility, so he contacted the city, only to be told that the building codes and guidelines are established according to provincial standards.

So this constituent has started a small business. He builds and sells lightweight, portable ramps. He may be handicapped, but he is working very hard to improve the quality of life not only for himself but for others. He is part of the solution, not part of a problem that exists in the mind and in the arrogant attitude of this government.

Lastly, I would like to mention that I promised during the election to have the entrance to my new constituency office modified to make it wheelchair accessible. It was my understanding that the government was to ensure accessibility to all MPPs' constituency offices, but I got tired of waiting for the government and I decided that it was incumbent on me to ensure that my office is accessible to all my constituents. We live in a democracy, and accessibility is a right, not a favour to be granted by the autocratic government.

C'est donc avec ferveur que j'appuie la motion de mon collègue et vous enjoins d'en faire du pareil.

Mr Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Today I am very pleased to speak in favour of the resolution before the House that will affect Ontarians with disabilities.

My riding is one of the largest in southern Ontario, over 12,000 square kilometres. The rural environment means that many disabled persons seeking medical treatment have to travel long distances to appointments with doctors.

Today the Premier has said that his government has had the courage to pursue a disabilities act. Well, I would like to talk a little bit about how Conservative courage has been translated in my riding.

The disabled persons of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington want to ask, where is the courage in denying them adequate support for travel to medical appointments? This government is cutting mileage support for persons with disabilities from 30 cents a kilometre to only six cents a kilometre, and recipients must claim a minimum cost of \$15 in order to be reimbursed. In other words, that's a trip of 250 kilometres. In my riding, a return trip from Bancroft to Belleville takes three hours, and yet only qualifies for a \$14.90 mileage expense; conveniently, 10 cents under the \$15 claim limit. I would only suggest that it does take a lot of courage and nerve to say to disabled people that they don't deserve compensation for that trip.

Mr Victor Fleming of Bancroft is a volunteer driver for a number of public agencies. For 14 years he has helped people with disabilities—children, young parents and adults who live in Bancroft—to travel to medical appointments throughout the riding. For example, he regularly drives a gentleman to Kingston for kidney dialysis treatment. The drive takes almost five hours and is a 374-kilometre round trip. Every agency for which he

drives pays a minimum of 27 cents a kilometre. He used to be reimbursed \$100 to cover expenses for a trip to Kingston when he carried a disabled passenger, and he will now receive only \$22. That doesn't even cover the cost of gas. At 66 cents a litre, he cannot pay for his gas to take the disabled person from Bancroft to Kingston.

A 29-year-old woman in my riding with fibromyalgia must travel to Kingston 12 times a month. She used to get \$45 per trip to cover her expenses, and now she gets nine dollars. She's out of pocket that difference. This is a disabled person who has already had her support reduced.

Today the Minister of Community and Social Services called the Ontario disability support plan "outstanding." This very morning I had a person in my constituency office who has applied twice for ODSP and both applications have been lost by this "outstanding" social service system.

Ontarians with disabilities need legislation to ensure they receive the support and access to the services they need and deserve. I urge all members to support the resolution before the House today.

1650

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I'm very happy indeed to speak on this resolution by my friend from Elgin-Middlesex-London. This is an important resolution because we have come to a point in time when enough has been said about this matter and we need to move forward.

The disabled community of this province deserves better from all of us, and as the minister sits in her place in this House, she needs to lead the way. This is something she can stand up and champion. In fact one of the more significant things I heard today came from the Premier. He said, "We live now in a new era, an era of budgetary surpluses." So he has signalled his willingness to move forward to invest in something as significant as an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, because it requires additional investment; there is no question about that.

I can't think of a better way for this government to lead us into the new century than by investing in this worthwhile initiative. I can't think of a better way to initiate a millennium project. Why not make this a millennium project? Why not do that on behalf of the people of this province? If it is true that we live in a new era, and many people have referred to the new economy which has made us more productive—of course largely led by the United States and the transformation that has taken place in the economy with regard to technological change—and we have greater productivity and an era of surpluses, it would stand to reason that we're going to need every single person, disabled or otherwise, to participate in our economy to make us as productive as we can be.

It's not good enough to leave those people behind, to leave them out of participation in our new-era economy. We need them. It's in our interest to enable them to be involved in the economic life of this province, and the only way they can do that is if we have a barrier-free society.

I urge the minister and I urge the members of this House to not only support this resolution, because that's easy to do and many previous parliaments have done the same thing, but it's far more important to have someone champion this cause and the minister can do just that. I urge everyone to support this resolution.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I rise in support of this resolution and my colleague Mr Peters. Advocates for the rights of the disabled have spent years trying to make government and the public aware of the needs as well as the abilities of disabled persons. Especially today these same advocates are saying to us, "You, as MPPs, have a special responsibility," and that is that we must treat every citizen of Ontario, not only with respect but we must open the doors so that they're part of our family, open the doors so that every person is able, not only to access a theatre and a library but also at least to some degree to participate in the economic development of our nation.

Unless we pass this resolution today, I am confident that the ideas of yesterday, the ideas of participation will be forgotten. I am confident that unless we pass this act today, we will not make any progress.

These advocates are reminding us today that MPPs—indeed MPPs of all parties—passed a special resolution in this Legislature over 10 years ago, a proclamation of the Decade of Disabled Persons. I have a copy right here. It says: "The government of Ontario fully supports the principles and ideals set forth by the United Nations and is committed to the goals of the fullest possible participation and equality of opportunity for persons with disabilities in the social and economic life of the province."

What is even more important, to the minister today and to all of us, is to review the principles that are at stake today. These principles are also found in this resolution of over 10 years ago. They read as follows:

"(1) The dignity, independence and potential of persons with disabilities will be respected in all aspects of life.

"(2) Persons with disabilities have equal rights and equal obligations, in common with all citizens, to participate in and contribute to community life.

"(3) Efforts will be made to increase public awareness of the abilities and needs of persons with disabilities in order to break down the barriers which exist due to a lack of understanding and outmoded attitudes."

I say to you today, let this minister go downstairs to those who are waiting right now to hear whether she and this government will indeed pass this act and give hope to all those who need access to institutions and to our country.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate. I wasn't in the House for the actual words that were spoken by a member of the government—by the minister, actually, I think—but the first thing I would like to do is correct the record. Someone on the government side said there was absolutely nothing in our election platform, and I know people watching this don't care too much about that sort

of thing, but nonetheless it is important to us to ensure that the record is kept straight. Indeed, we did have a clear policy.

You will recall that while the government implemented the 30% tax cut, and the Liberals refused to do anything about it, when we made commitments around education funding, health care funding, social services, and within that of course disabled individuals, we said: "That's where we'll get the money. We'll raise it by reversing the tax cut for the top 6% of income earners," who got the lion's share of the tax cut, and that's where we'd get the real money. There was a policy paper that clearly articulated that point of view; it was part of our platform. So the record should show that anything to the contrary of us having a detailed position and an explanation of how we were going to pay for it is at best inaccurate and at worst indescribable, using parliamentary language.

1700

Moving on, we know today that once again the Premier just doesn't seem to learn. He again has invoked the name of Gary Malkowski, a former MPP for the New Democratic Party during the time we were in government from 1990 to 1995; indeed, he was one of the parliamentary assistants responsible for this legislation. I just want to bring to the attention of the House that the Toronto Star reported—and I do this for a reason; that reason is Gary is here. He's downstairs in one of the committee rooms watching the proceedings this afternoon, as are a lot of other people who are leaders within the disabled community and supporters of that leadership. They're watching very carefully, because this means an awful lot to them. Gary is as furious this time as he was the last time that Premier Harris insists on misrepresenting Gary's comments.

On December 4, 1998—this is straight from the Toronto Star—"former provincial politician, says Mike Harris is taking his comments out of context to bolster support for his 'useless, toothless and patronizing' disabilities act.

"I can't believe what Mike Harris has done, using my name the way he has," Malkowski said in an interview yesterday. 'He's using my name for some benefit.'

"Last week, Harris stood up in the Legislature to defend his controversial Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and said Malkowski has publicly complimented the government on its disabled initiatives.

"We have had more people with disabilities, including a former New Democratic member who came forward and said of the move we made: 'This is the biggest breakthrough in the history of the Ontario Legislature,'" Harris is quoted as saying.

"Regardless of the context, Malkowski is furious his name is positively linked to anything the Conservatives are doing when it comes the disabled.

"Malkowski has written a letter to the Premier asking him to withdraw the statement from the record, and to stop undermining his credibility 'by making false and public statements.'"

Speaker, I read this into the record because I assure you that Gary Malkowski intends again to call on the Premier to stop using his name in an inappropriate fashion in terms of saying that Mr Malkowski supports anything that this government has done with regard to an ODA.

My point in putting this in the record is to show that it's not the first time. The Premier knew better. When the ruckus is raised later today and tomorrow over what he has done to Mr Malkowski and his good reputation, I ask you, Speaker, and other members of this House to bear in mind that this is not a slip of the tongue. This is a Premier who has been here before, on this very issue, with the same member, which in my opinion just points to the fact that this government will say anything to make it sound like they care.

The reality, however, is in the bill they introduced: two pages. It's insulting, an absolute insult to all the people who have worked so many years. I know in our community Aznive Mallett and my former ward mate, Councillor Geraldine Cops, have played a leadership role in making sure that the issues in Hamilton—and my riding encompasses the largest concentration of people with disabilities in terms of the downtown area. So what Hamilton had to say, in my opinion, is important, and not just in the Hamilton context but in an Ontario context, which will take me, after I read one more quote into the record, to focus on process more than anything.

A lot has been said about the government's track record, the things they've done and the things they haven't done. I don't want to repeat those things. I want to focus on the process that was followed last time and the absolute, total requirement and responsibility this government has to provide a process that is transparent, that is responsible, accountable and accessible, much like the rights the disabled are asking to have certified here in the province in terms of barrier-free access in other matters.

I want to put again on the record, with regard to the last go-round, that we heard the Premier say—it's amazing he could say these things—the leaders in the disabled community were pleased—and I state clearly that I'm paraphrasing—with what he has done and they were supportive of what he has done. Let me assure you, Speaker, if that's the case, I haven't heard it. All I have heard from the leadership in the disabled community, and quite frankly anybody who cares at all about disabled citizens, is that their rights are not being accorded to them and that this government has shown no interest in sincerely honouring the commitment they made both in the election campaign and in this House.

I refer members to the debate of this Legislature on Thursday, October 29, 1998, where the then member for Windsor-Walkerville moved a motion that outlined 11 factors that must be included in any acceptable ODA. It's interesting that some of the members who voted in favour—no one voted against it—include the now chief government whip, who, as I understand it, has a seat at the cabinet table and has great influence. He supported this resolution that called for these 11 factors. Almost

every one of those factors was violated in terms of the insult that the government tabled prior to the last election.

Aznive Mallett, whom I have already mentioned, was the co-chair of the Hamilton ODA committee. She wrote an op-ed piece for the Hamilton Spectator. She starts off by saying:

"Since when does government spend time and money to develop and implement legislation, when an internal memo would achieve the same results?"

"This provincial government is enacting a law to require its own departments to write reports regarding access for persons with disabilities. To me, this is like using a nuclear bomb to remove a wart from Johnny's finger. And, isn't it ridiculous to remove a wart from Johnny's finger when Johnny needs heart surgery?"

She then goes on at great length to describe and explain why she not only doesn't support this legislation, but considers it an insult.

Speaking now to the process, I can recall when the government, as they saw their election timetable looming, set out to ask people what they thought ought to be—as if they didn't have enough information and studies and opinions, but they asked for one more go-round. I'm assuming it happened all across Ontario because it happened in Hamilton, and it was ordered from the minister's office that, yes, they were inviting people to make submissions about what an Ontarians with Disabilities Act would look like, but no one was allowed to hear what anybody else was saying. It was almost a Star Chamber. They literally ordered people to stay outside the room while each delegation came in.

Why would they do that? Because they knew the kind of legislation they were going to bring in, and if everybody sitting in that committee room had a chance to hear the submissions of others then they would readily realize—they did anyway which is what makes the thing so stupid and juvenile but they would have realized maybe a little quicker—that every one of us talked about maybe some of those 11 factors I've mentioned earlier and the importance of having substantive barrier removals outlined in legislation, and the resulting legislation was nowhere near that.

It's the only thing I can think of, that it was to try to keep expectation levels lower. What other reason and justification could there be for a government being so obviously undemocratic?

That's not just me. Al MacRury, a writer of some renown with the Hamilton Spectator, writes about disability issues. The heading of the article he wrote about that process is "Disabilities Bill a Waste of Time, Money."

He said the following: "So now we know. No surprise really. A government only attempts to muzzle the media, manipulate the masses and deceive the disabled if it intends to railroad through its own Ontarians with Disabilities Act in the form it, and only it, considers acceptable."

"What Isabel Bassett"—that was the then minister responsible—"has brought before Queen's Park is an insult, say activists who've tried their hardest and given their utmost in a vain attempt to get the Ontario government's attention.

"Instead, Bassett's Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Tourism intends to introduce a disabilities act that's basically a nonentity. Strange behaviour, considering her family's wealth is rooted in the media—the very institution ordered banned from all committee meetings on the legislation except one.

"That was the August 12 session in Hamilton, which I attended and they didn't like that one little bit. One ministry representative suggested I could watch proceedings (nice of her to dictate my civil rights) but not perform my job.

"The day my column ran in the *Spectator*, I received a call from Bassett's executive assistant, wondering why I showed up.

"We've decided the meeting are closed," he said. "We didn't think it was a matter of discussion."

"Well, it should have been. And if the Progressive Conservative government rams through this eunuch of an act, the legacy it leaves behind will cripple thousands of Ontarians with disabilities."

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you for that contribution, Bert.

We know, of course, that the historical result of all this is that yes, they did indeed introduce an insult of a bill, a couple of pages long. I would agree with Aznive Mallett that the same could have been achieved, given how little is in here, with a memo to most of the ministries. In fact, a lot of what they put in this bill, we as an NDP government had already directed ministries to do; and it was this government, as I understand it, shortly after they took power in 1995, that stopped that work. Now we know why they didn't want anybody in the committee room. They wanted to play this as low as possible. They came in with this insult of a bill. I think they realized at the end of the day that even though this government is used to ramming things through and ignoring the public, even this one, in the context of Tory legislation, was over the top. So it didn't move and it died on the order paper.

1710

That's what's so infuriating when we listen to Premier Mike Harris talk about how much he cares about individuals with disabilities, how much he really cares about making sure that barriers are removed. Then we heard the Minister of Social Services, and it was aggravating at the very least today to hear him stand up and talk. All he did was repeat a litany of a list of expenditures, and quite frankly those expenditures in most cases are nothing new. They were initiated by previous governments, and if we've maintained the same funding levels with this government, we're lucky, let alone see any increases.

The fact of the matter is this is the same group that decided it was OK back in 1995 to cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 22%. "Oh yes, but we didn't

include the disabled in that. We made sure that they didn't take that hit. It was only the rest of the people who are in poverty that we hit," like somehow that makes it OK. One thing they never addressed is the fact that some of the children of these families that had their income cut by 22.6% are disabled. How can you possibly argue that didn't hurt people who are already disadvantaged, vulnerable and hurting? Then they had the audacity to stand up a couple of years later and beat their chest and say what a great job they're doing for the disabled and how much they care about people who are in poverty.

I wanted to say to the members of the government across the way: You may think that you can compartmentalize the rich and give them continuing tax cuts and that's going to keep them happy, and compartmentalize the poor and write them off because you know that demographically there's a lower percentage of people with lower income and lower education who vote, and hope that somehow the middle class will disregard both those two categories and think that somehow this government's agenda is good for them. The reality is that there's an awful lot of working middle-class families out there who are scared of the future under Mike Harris.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): A lot of them voted for us.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, you're right, member from Stoney Creek, a lot of them did vote for you. That doesn't mean that what you're doing is the right thing to do. Neither does it mean that there won't be a point in time, which I'm willing to bet there will be, where people are going to stand back and take a look at what these trade-offs have been and who benefited and who was hurt. I believe that's going to happen very quickly. Anywhere you look in the health care system, education system, social services, environmental protection, labour law—go down the list—the big losers in terms of mass numbers at the end of the day are the group that you think aren't paying attention, of whom you so arrogantly say, "Well, they keep voting for us." It's the working middle class that is still the largest group in our society, and you cannot continue to pamper the very wealthy and hurt the very poor and think that somehow the middle class will believe that they'll remain unaffected by this.

Ask that middle class whether they think it's a fair trade-off that there be tax benefits for the very wealthy but not enough money to provide a decent, appropriate Ontarians with Disabilities Act in this province. Ask them if they think that's fair. That's what is happening today as we, the opposition members, put that issue squarely in front of the government through this opposition day motion.

The fact is that we're watching. You got away with it the last time. They did, Speaker. It breaks my heart to admit it, but there you are. There are the facts; can't deny it. They're still sitting on that side of the House with a majority. So, yes, they got away with it. They insulted the disabled community, they bamboozled the rest of the population, and I guess they're hoping they can do the same thing again this term because now they've got to

cut another 20%. We heard \$300 million the other day. There's another \$600 million to go. Does anybody honestly think that with those kinds of cuts on the table, they are suddenly going to find the money necessary to make sure that disabled Ontarians are having their rights entrenched in law? I don't think so.

At the end of the day, the government will not be able to get away with this sham of a process, as they did the last time, where they tried to manipulate who came into the committee room, who would hear what's going on and who was excluded. You're not going to get away with that this time. You're going to have to come to grips with the fact that there are obligations and commitments that this government has given in election times and in motions and resolutions voted upon in this Legislature and that you're going to have to honour those commitments, unlike in the past.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I want to end my comments not by talking about where we've been in the past and what that means. Much of that was dealt with in the last election. But I do want to say that you have an obligation, members of the government—especially new members like the one now who thinks he's been around here long enough that he can sit back and heckle. I can't hear what you're saying. The first lesson of heckling is to make sure you're heard.

Let me tell you something. I'm betting and I'm hoping that you would have been embarrassed by what happened here the last time. I would hope that as a new member you would say: "I'm not tied to that old process. I've got an obligation as a new member to ensure the things that I ran on are implemented." You've made commitments and you're now hearing from us and the disabled community; the leadership is here today. They're all saying to you and your colleagues, you have a moral responsibility to provide the kind of legislation that you promised. Your colleagues didn't do it in the last Harris government; maybe you'll be more successful this time.

I see you nodding your head. I hope we can count on you to vote in favour of this resolution as a first step in showing your good faith in wanting to see the commitments made to the disabled citizens of this community, who have rights, guaranteed in law so that they begin to see their rights showing themselves in our communities.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I totally support this resolution, and I would encourage all of the members in the House to support it. We need a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and the only way to get it is for this government to move on a commitment that they made five years ago.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I was going to say I'm pleased to participate in the debate, but boy, oh, boy, I know there are a lot of people watching this, many from their homes, many here in this building from the disability community and supporters of Ontarians with disabilities who have been fighting for fairness and access to full civic life, who really wish they weren't having to listen to a debate like this again, who really

wish that government and all politicians at this point in time would just live up to commitments.

One of the things that really distresses me—and it started again in question period today, when our member from Broadview-Greenwood, our disabilities critic, and others put questions to the Premier. The Premier either sloughs off the questions or answers them in a way that is so derisive of the serious nature of the concerns, so dismissive of the realities of everyday life that persons with disabilities face, whether it's needing to use a public pay phone that's too high to reach or being mobility challenged and not being able to get across a street in time, the way the street lights are sequenced, or not being able to go into a restaurant, a theatre or transit. Let's talk about transit, to be able to get to places, to be able to get to employment, to be able to get to enjoy recreational life. There are so many barriers—to work, to learning, to fully participating—and the Premier just, in such a derisive way, dismisses those concerns and gives rhetoric about this government having done more than any government in the history of the province.

Interjection.

Ms Lankin: Yes, he could get philosophical about this stuff. There's a quotation, citation; actually, it comes from the Bible. I'm not really good on biblical citations, but I can tell you the intent of it. It talks about the moral bankruptcy of leadership, of governing leadership when it uses hot buttons and plays on people's emotions and manipulates emotions to get support for what they want to do. That's one of the hallmarks of this government. But when you take it even a step further—it's not twisting the facts, it's not selectively using the facts in order to promote the case that you're trying to make, but you totally ignore the fact and the reality of the situation. You have citizens of this province, here in this building today and watching this debate, who are demanding, rightfully, full access to full participation in civic life. And he starts partisan shots about who did what when.

1720

The minister herself, in the debate here this afternoon, spent most of her time not giving full and valid facts about the record of your government and simply pointed fingers across the floor. People in this building and in this room and watching this debate want to know what you're going to do as a government, want to know how you're going to live up to the promise that you made to Ontarians with disabilities when you promised an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, a full and effective piece of legislation; want to know when you're going to retrieve yourself from the sham of the piece of legislation that you brought forward which did nothing to accomplish even the goals that you had set out in the beginning of the discussion paper that preceded the legislation. It was a terrible betrayal on the part of your government, and you have done nothing to indicate to people that you are prepared to take the steps necessary to retrieve yourself from that situation and to bring about the equity that people are rightly demanding.

When I think about all of the pointing of fingers, when I think about all of the promises that have been held out, I think about someone who right now is perhaps sitting in a wheelchair in committee room 1, who says: "You know something, I don't give a darn who said what when. I just want to be able to have access to go to restaurants, to be able to go to school, to be able to go to work. I want an end to the discrimination against me in terms of full participation and in terms of attitudinal discrimination." Quite frankly, I bet you they would also say: "I want employment equity legislation, which got stopped in this province. I want a policy of full access to transit, that transit must be wheelchair-accessible, a policy which was ended, shamefully, in this province. I want a piece of legislation that ensures that the new road to prosperity program that the Conservative government has announced and all of the building of infrastructure that they've talked about, that everything that is built is going to be accessible to me as a citizen, as a person with a disability."

I bet you that's what they want. They want a government that betrayed them once to stand up and say, "I'm sorry and we're going to get it right this time," instead of all of this nonsense—I was almost unparliamentary—that we hear in the chamber today.

People with disabilities—1.5 million Ontarians—have made their voices very clear. They have spent the time working with politicians, legislators, policy-makers of all three political parties and of the civil service, to articulate the principles that must be contained within an effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This Legislature endorsed those principles. What a PR move it was on the part of the government members.

Obviously they stood—well, maybe with good intentions as individual members, not knowing their government was going to bail out on that commitment. I will give the benefit of the doubt to some individual members. Now is the time to stand up and be counted. If you were here and you stood and voted for that resolution, you should be part of the voice being raised today by Ontarians with disabilities, and by elected representatives on their behalf, demanding that the cabinet of this province respond with effective legislation.

The time for finger pointing is over. The time for aggrandizing what meager steps have been taken is over.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): That's a big word for a socialist.

Ms Lankin: There's a minister across who likes to snipe a lot. I say to him: I remember him in opposition, I remember him at one point in time being an advocate for persons with disabilities. I see him now sitting there and not raising his voice in support of doing the right thing, absolutely defending his government's lack of action. Worse than that is the scam they perpetrated on the people of Ontario and people with disabilities. Yes, I've provoked the minister. And you know what? That's my job. My job here is to try and provoke these ministers to do the right thing finally. It is shameful that we are here debating this one more time.

I have seen this government stand and take credit for initiatives like the Ontario disability support program. You will remember, Mr Speaker, that I'm one of those people who, when I see something that has potential and could be a good initiative, will say that. I stood and I said that the creation of that program was one of the things that had potential for persons with disability in this province, that it had potential for delivering, finally, a self-support program for people to live with dignity. I'm sad to have to stand and say that I was right at the time when I also said, "The devil is in the details and will be in the implementation."

When we see persons with disabilities coming into our offices, being treated the way they are through the Ontario disability support program—not through any fault of the staff; the staff and the offices are totally under-resourced—with real changes that are being done behind the backdoor and being pushed through without thinking through the implications of what it means, people whose lives are dependant, month to month, on receiving those benefits and receiving the support, like transportation support to get to, perhaps, the hospital for dialysis—one of the constituents I had had that money cut off and taken off the cheque inadvertently, incorrectly, we now find out, because of a rule change the minister put through and didn't understand how it would apply to people who were actual participants of the program.

When we see people lined up for appeals around eligibility, we worry. We all worried that the eligibility criteria would be implemented and put in place in such a way as to unfairly limit the number of people having access to that program. We were right about that. The line-ups, the lack of adjudication ability, the capability within the system means people are having to await their day and await justice. We don't at this point in time know what the end result of that will be.

I know, as I look across at the members opposite, that they know what I'm talking about. As constituents' representatives, your offices have to be receiving the same volume and number of calls that our offices have been receiving. You must know the nature of the problem. Who's standing up and speaking about it? Who's standing up for persons with disabilities and saying: "This model program we created that was supposed to be something good, our commitment to the disability community, is failing. We need to do something to show we were serious about that?" Who over there is standing up on behalf of persons with disabilities? Unfortunately, it sure isn't the minister.

That speech today was shameful. She was, I'm sure, being booed in the rooms downstairs. I am sure that people who were there listening were aghast that a minister who is supposed to be responsible for issues that affect their lives, that affect their livelihood, that affect their ability to live with dignity in our communities and to be full citizens, would stand and give a speech like that, that didn't even give acknowledgement to the legiti-

mate concerns and the legitimate grievances on behalf of that community—

Mr Christopherson: Shame.

Ms Lankin: People say, "Shame." It is shameful.

It would have been nice if once in today's debate someone on behalf of the government had said what your plan would be—not simply more study, not simply more talk—what is it you are going to do to fulfill your promise to bring in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

I presume, although none of you will admit it, that having abandoned the previous piece of legislation, you understand how woefully inadequate that piece of legislation was.

What is your plan to replace it and to live up to the commitments you have made? Who is going to stand and tell all the people who are here in the Legislative Assembly today to watch this debate, and all the people at home who have tuned in to find out about their future or the futures of their loved ones, family members of persons with disabilities, who is going to tell them what the government of Ontario plans to do with respect to the concerns they've brought forward, with respect to the legitimate demands they've made, with respect to the fundamental issues that are going to affect the rest of their lives?

The silence is deafening. It's an interesting phrase to use as we are talking about persons with disabilities, as we are talking about people who are hearing-impaired, people who are sight-impaired, who are mobility-impaired, people who have differing abilities, who want to use those abilities but who find barriers in the way of using those abilities because we as a society have not opened the doors. We have built those barriers. It is incumbent on all of us to be part of tearing down those barriers, and that can only be done under the leadership of a government that is prepared to live up to its commitment and prepared to do the right thing by all of the people of this province.

1730

Those who are here today who have been watching this debate, who yearn to hear a positive indication from the government of Ontario, have been disappointed once again. But, boy, they're a resilient lot. They have not given up. They are here. They will be back. They will continue to fight for their rights, and we will continue to stand beside them. We will continue to say that this government has failed 1.5 million Ontarians and others of us who support them. We will continue to ensure that you are held accountable for that. They will not forget.

Mr Duncan: It's with a mixture of sadness and anger that I stand today. I want to briefly review the history of this issue.

First of all, the Davis government put disabled issues into the Human Rights Code. The Peterson government expanded those rights. The Rae government, to their credit, on a variety of issues responded to the needs of the disabled community.

I listened and almost fell out of my chair today when I heard the Premier of Ontario suggest that both of the

previous governments failed to do an ODA. What he forgot to tell the people of this province was there was no request for it up until that time. What he didn't tell the people was that he signed a letter in May 1985, promising that in his first term he would bring in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. He forgets that their caucus voted for Marion Boyd's resolution on dealing with an ODA in its first term. He forgot to talk about that, and he forgot to talk about the fact that his caucus voted for a resolution a little over a year ago defining the principles—it was a unanimous vote of this Legislature. Then a year ago today your former minister, the minister who was defeated, brought in a bill that your government found so appalling, so lacking, that they in fact withdrew the bill in their next throne speech and renounced the bill.

Then I heard members standing up and talking about what this government has done for the disabled people in this province. What you have is the most sorry legacy, the most broken commitments, the biggest failure of any government in this province or in any other province. You're behind the Americans. We're 10 years behind the Americans today in terms of a disabilities act with teeth that protects the people of this province. Your minister has not responded to requests to meet with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee. You have an absolutely shameful record.

Today in Windsor at ALPHA House there are about 150 people watching this debate. They read your commitment. They saw your vote on the last two occasions. There are people in the north of Toronto—the member for Thornhill—who have been calling in. They've been watching. There's a group in Guelph. They've been watching, just as the whole province has been watching.

This government should be ashamed of its failure to act, and I urge you to vote for this resolution as you voted for the last two resolutions, to ensure fairness for all Ontarians.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's my pleasure to rise today and join the debate on the resolution made by the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London. I want to congratulate that member for bringing the resolution forward. I was very encouraged at the start of his debate when he talked in very non-partisan terms about this issue, and for quite some time he led the discussion in that direction.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Order. Please keep the conversations down so that I might hear the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: Thank you, Speaker.

I was quite encouraged, as I was saying, about the direction in which the member opposite led off the debate, but then he let a couple of things slip in that I really found offensive, when he then equated that if someone decided to vote against this bill they'd somehow be against the disabled, they would be opposed to the disabled working in the mainstream in our society. Nothing could be further from the truth. When you do things like that you frustrate people and you make them

almost want to say: "No, that's not fair. There could be very good reasons why someone would vote against the resolution."

I had a resolution last week in private members' hour that I thought was a way we could solve the doctors' shortage, the distribution problem throughout Ontario and all the members of the Liberal party voted against it. I didn't stand up and say they were against solving a doctor distribution problem if they voted against it. That wouldn't be fair and that wouldn't be appropriate, but he's done that and I found that offensive. We don't do that on this side of the aisle and I'd appreciate it if it wouldn't be done on that side of the aisle.

The second thing I'd like to talk about is that I want to congratulate the minister, the member from Guelph, the member from Thornhill. I thought they did an excellent job of talking about a lot of the things this government has done in the ministries of Education, Transportation, and Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, and Finance and on and on in dealing with and putting in supports and trying to improve accessibility for the disabled. I think they did a very good job and I think it's appropriate during this debate that those initiatives were heard, so I want to congratulate them for that.

One thing I've noticed in this debate is that with the exception of the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, who at the outset of his debate talked about some general principles, not one Liberal in the entire time has talked about any concrete ideas on what should be in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. During the time they were having this debate you would think that they would stand up and talk about that, and that's a frustration for us on this side of the aisle.

Another part of this I'd like to talk about is quite simply that when we did brought in Bill 83—I have a copy here with me—we introduced a bill after a lot of consultation, and it didn't go far enough and the disabled community said it didn't go far enough, and so we're back at it again.

I've had people in my community asking me to do some more consultation with them, and I'm doing that. I've got a person in my riding who I'm dealing with—I'm not going to name her, a very capable person with cerebral palsy—who is very tied in with the Ontario March of Dimes and the disabled community. She's quite an activist, and we're working together to put together a survey for the people in the Niagara community. We're going to get some help with some of the local agencies and we're going to ask the people of Niagara what it is they want in an ODA. I think that's an important process to continue to move forward with.

We made changes to the building code, changes that the members opposite when they were in government didn't make, and these were improvements to access for the disabled. Let me just give you a few examples. Increasing the number of building entrances required to be constructed as barrier free: Currently only one entrance was required; we've changed that. We addressed the needs of the visually impaired by requiring warning

strips and prohibiting escalators or stair designs that have no barriers or construction underneath to warn the visually impaired. We required all building controls accessible to the disabled to be operable using one hand. These were some things, and there are more. I don't want sit and read the list all day long, but there more things that we have done in the Ontario building code.

In my survey that I'm working on, we're going to ask what are some more things this government might be able to put in the Ontario building code.

The Ministry of Finance: We brought in the workplace accessibility tax incentive program, which was announced in 1998 at an estimated cost of \$7 million. The program is going to offset the accommodation costs to businesses when they hire persons with disabilities. This is an incentive for the private sector to bring forward to make their workplaces more accessible and to hire very skilled people who might not right now be able to work in that workplace because of their disability. That's an important initiative and maybe we can look at more things along those lines.

I've recently had some more meetings. I've brought some people from the March of Dimes in the riding to meet with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and we raised some of these building code issues. That's important consultation that led to serious change.

1740

I've had some more recent conversations with the schizophrenia society in my riding. We had a very good conversation and we had a discussion about the possibility of having one centralized access point in communities throughout Ontario where people with disabilities can find out: What are the resources? What are the whole pool of things that are out there and available for me?

There are two groups here, under 21 and over 21. There are different services available, depending upon your age, in this province, and I find in talking to a lot of people in the community that they have difficulty. If they have a son or daughter born with a disability, what's available to them? It's very difficult to know. Their doctor might tell them a few things. When their child is four or five years old and goes to school, the teacher or principal might tell them what's available. But it becomes very difficult to get a good sense of what actually is available in the community. Maybe we can have something like that in an Ontarians with Disability Act, some central access point. When you turn 21, the basket of services that are available to you changes, and I think there needs to be some kind of central access point.

We need to talk about these things. We need to be serious, to have positive input from the other side about the specific things that they think should be in the bill.

I don't have much more time to go into this. One of the things that kills me about this debate is that the minister started off reading a letter from the Liberal leader saying that they would bring in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act within three years of being elected and being able to govern. I don't understand—not one of

them has answered the question of why three years was okay for them but two years is what the time line has to be on this side. If someone could come up with an answer to that, I would like to hear that. We asked the question several times and we never did get an answer.

There are a lot of things that were said during debate. The member opposite, Ms Lankin, from Beaches-Woodbine, made a very impassioned plea—

Ms Lankin: Beaches-East York.

Mr Maves: Beaches-East York, she wants me to say. She made a very impassioned plea. She's a very excellent public speaker, but we on this of the aisle wonder, where were these impassioned pleas when she was in cabinet and where was the Ontarians with Disabilities Act when they were in government? That's not to say that we shouldn't have one, and that's not to say we shouldn't have one soon. We will, and we're going to continue to work on it, but hypocrisy can only go on so far. This was what their bill was: non-existent.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I am very proud to join this important debate here today.

Today for the third time, this House is going to ask Mike Harris to make good on his promise to the disabled community. While the two previous resolutions received the unanimous support of this Legislature, Mike Harris has ignored them both. Today we're going to send Mike Harris another message. We are looking for, and in fact we are demanding, a vote every bit as strong.

Some people are going to ask: "Why bother? Why bring a motion like this before the Legislature one more time? Mike Harris has ignored us before. Isn't he simply going to ignore us again?"

My dad used to tell us a story about a prize bull. He grew up on a farm, and apparently there was a farmer who owned this prize bull. People would come from miles around to visit this magnificent and proud beast, which was kept in a stall in the corner of a barn. When the people would come in to visit the bull, the farmer would pick up a two by four and hit the bull with all of his strength over the head. People would say, "Why did you do that?" and the farmer would say, "That's how I get his attention."

Today, for the third time, we're going to hit Mike Harris over the head with a resolution. Some people would say that's a lot of hits, three hits over the head, but I can tell you that when we're dealing with Mike Harris, that's a lot of bull. Quite frankly, if we have to drag this Premier kicking and screaming into keeping his own promise to pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, then that is exactly what I and my caucus intend to do.

It was in May 1995 that Mike Harris made a promise. Quite simply, he said, "Elect me, and I will pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act in my first term of office." He also promised the members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, "Elect me, and you will be able to help draft this important piece of legislation."

The painful truth—it's painful for the government to acknowledge this truth and painful for the disabled community because of the betrayal—is that Mike Harris

broke both these promises. And not only did the Harris government fail to bring in any kind of meaningful legislation, but in a move that smacks of the worst kind of arrogance, Mike Harris refused to even meet with the ODA committee, let alone consult them in any real fashion on a piece of very important legislation.

Unlike the Premier, I believe that when you make a promise, you stand by it. It's all about trust and integrity, and the people of this province have the right to expect from their Premier that he will be someone who can be trusted; he will be a person of integrity. Unfortunately, this government's betrayal of the disabled community doesn't end with Mike Harris's failure to enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Sadly, there is more.

In the Common Sense Revolution, Mike Harris promised, "Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut." He felt this promise was so important, so essential to secure voters, that he bolded that statement for emphasis. Well, a promise from Mike Harris was supposed to be golden. This is the guy who was self-described as the only honest politician in Ontario. He was the guy who said, "If I don't keep my promises as Premier, I'll resign." Let's check out the record.

When it comes to keeping his promise not to cut people with disabilities, he cut \$50 million in direct services to people with developmental disabilities; he imposed mandatory user fees on prescription drugs for disabled persons on the Ontario drug benefit program; he changed the definition of "disabled," making it harder for people to receive financial support and reducing the benefits for many who were not cut off entirely; he has underfunded the special services at home program so badly that families needing support have seen an average reduction of 30%. Finally, Mike Harris's cuts to education funding have resulted in the tragic loss of programs like speech pathology and special education in our schools. It turns out that Mike Harris's promises were indeed as good as gold: Bre-X gold, absolutely worthless.

Like so much else in politics, it really boils down to a matter of values and priorities. Either you believe, like this caucus, that an essential role of government is to help people reach their full potential and you make that a priority, or you don't. From our perspective, a real priority of government, any government, should be to ensure that there is room for everybody at the Ontario table, that everybody finds opportunity, that everybody realizes their potential, that everybody is able to make a contribution, that everybody is enabled. This is not only a matter of good social policy; this is fundamentally a matter of good economic policy.

I want to recognize the tireless work of David Lepofsky and his ODA committee. If there is anybody in this province who thinks for a second that disabilities can't be overcome, they should meet David Lepofsky. David is blind, but his vision is crystal-clear. He sees a province where disabled people are able to make a contribution not only to their own success but to the greater success of our province. We are proud to join David in his fight for a real Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

I want to let everybody know how proud I am of the hard work done by our disabilities critic, Steve Peters. When I appointed Steve, I asked him to champion this fight on behalf of the 1.5 million disabled Ontarians, and he has not let me down and he has not let that community down. I thank him for that.

In conclusion, I want to say clearly to the people with disabilities who are watching or listening to this debate today that the single greatest barrier you face in reaching your full potential is no longer your disability, it's the man who is seating in the Premier's chair.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Peters has moved opposition day number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of Mr Peters's resolution will stand one by one.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Armott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles

Flaherty, Jim
Gerretsen, John
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Gravelle, Michael
Guzzo, Garry J.

Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve

Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Chudleigh, Ted
Churley, Marilyn
Clark, Brad
Cleary, John C.
Coburn, Brian
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Cunningham, Dianne
Curling, Alvin
DeFaria, Carl
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Hoy, Pat
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Kells, Morley
Kennedy, Gerard
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Lankin, Frances
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McGuinty, Dalton
McLeod, Lyn
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn

Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Runciman, Robert W.
Ruprecht, Tony
Sampson, Rob
Sergio, Mario
Skarica, Toni
Smitherman, George
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):
The ayes are 88; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is carried. This House stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1805.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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**Official Report
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**Journal
des débats
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Tuesday 23 November 1999

Mardi 23 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 23 novembre 1999

The House met at 1848.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MORE TAX CUTS FOR JOBS, GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT, 1999 LOI DE 1999 RÉDUISANT DE NOUVEAU LES IMPÔTS POUR STIMULER L'EMPLOI, LA CROISSANCE ET LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 22, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario / *Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 1999 et à apporter d'autres modifications à diverses lois en vue de favoriser un climat propice à l'emploi, à la croissance et à la prospérité en Ontario.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr John O'Toole): Further debate? The member for Hamilton West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Thank you, Speaker. I have all the faith in the world that all of my parliamentary rights will be upheld by the illustrious interim Chair, beginning with seeking unanimous consent to split the time as a formality. I understand that the previous speaker did not—

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): With which empty chair?

Mr Christopherson: With an empty chair that already spoke the other night. I'd just like to continue the leadoff debate, so I seek unanimous consent to do that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, and I mean that. That one could get close.

Let me first of all thank my colleague M. Bisson for filling in for the initial 10 or so minutes of the leadoff debate by our caucus on Bill 14, which interestingly enough, Speaker—oh, another Speaker. Welcome.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): You can't keep up.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, really. You take your eyes off the ball for one moment and—now if only I could look away and you guys would disappear when I look back, that would be an improvement.

Interjection: You're hoping too high.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, asking for too much.

Interestingly, Bill 14 is another infamous omnibus bill. It deals with a whole slew of things. Of course if you've listened to the government members speak to this, you'd be convinced that it's innocuous to the extent that it doesn't do anything really substantive and that anything indeed it does do is merely changing small, minor matters. Of course they will argue that it'll have a significant benefit, but the reality, as always with this government, is very different between the facts and what they say.

I say to my colleagues across the way that the best example of that I can think of was in the auditor's report. It does tie into one of the items that appears in Bill 14, and I will make that connection in a moment. But what I want to draw to the attention of especially government members is the fact that the government for a long time—and actually, interestingly enough, in the House as I speak is the current minister of corrections, who in a previous life was the minister for privatization. That was the title, Minister without Portfolio responsible for privatization?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): Yes.

Mr Christopherson: Of course, privatization has been a cornerstone of what this government believes is an important part of a prosperous future. We in the New Democratic Party obviously see it entirely differently. It's interesting that it would appear that the Provincial Auditor shares our opinion. Not necessarily ideologically or philosophically, because that's not what he's hired to do; his job is to analyze the business of the government from a dollar perspective and an efficiency perspective and determine whether or not indeed the people who've been entrusted with the business of the people of Ontario are doing it properly.

When he talks about what happens in transportation, where you have privatized, it's interesting that for all the government's talk about how wonderful the world will be under privatization, we're not getting as good a service as we had before and it's costing us more money. Strange. That's the reality from a government that at every opportunity will talk a great game, but we predicted that this was not going to work out the way the government predicted, and we were right.

What does the auditor say? I'm quoting from his report that was tabled with all of us just in the last few days. "Additionally, the ministry based overhead cost for two districts on 1995-96 data whereas 1997-98 data were used to calculate the overhead costs for the other two districts." This is getting to the good part: "The ministry

also included in its estimated savings imputed financial financing charges on the purchase of equipment. However, if the ministry had continued to provide highway maintenance services instead of agreeing to pay the four contractors a total of \$93.1 million, it would have had to spend \$93.3 million. Outsourcing will therefore result in minimal cash flow savings."

That, I want to advise members of the government, is the good news. It gets worse. "Nevertheless the ministry included financing costs of \$2.3 million in its estimates which it based on a cash flow reduction of \$13.8 million from not buying the equipment. Therefore, the ministry has not considered the financing costs for all government cash flows including cash flows to outsourcing contractors. If all of these costs were factored out of the ministry's estimates, outsourcing"—another word for contracting out—"would result in estimated losses on three of the four contracts."

That's in addition to the fact that there are questions of whether or not the service delivery was as good as it would have been had it been maintained within the responsibility of the provincial government.

We happen to have the Minister of Transportation here. I see him feverishly making notes, so I would expect he's going to want to comment. I mean this sincerely: I would hope that your answer is not going to be the one you gave in the House the day we asked you about the auditor's report.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I'm being serious. Your response at that time was, "The auditor is wrong."

Hon Mr Turnbull: I did not say that.

Mr Christopherson: You look up the Hansard. I'm paraphrasing, but that was the essence of your message. You were saying that he did something wrong; he didn't take something into account.

Hon Mr Turnbull: You look up the Hansard.

Mr Christopherson: Before the night is out I'll find the Hansard, because I don't think I'm that far off the mark in suggesting that your response was to say that somehow the auditor had missed the point, that he hadn't calculated correctly or had not included something in his calculation that you up there on Mount Olympus felt was important to be in the calculation. We'll check the Hansard.

Nonetheless, rather than address the serious issue that the auditor raised, Minister, what you did was question the methodology or the work the auditor did. When that happened, I had a vision—one that I enjoy—of remembering when the roles were reversed and we sat over there and you were over here. Had we suggested at any point that the auditor was wrong, I know you would have been all over us. As I recall, I don't think we took that approach, certainly not to my recollection. I stand to be corrected, but I'm not aware that we took that approach.

That's your answer. It's the height of arrogance and it's consistent with the way this government acts when they're confronted with facts they don't like. They just deny them.

I remember asking Al Leach a question about the numbers coming out of Hamilton in terms of the downloading and the fact that in Hamilton-Wentworth we were being screwed out of over \$36 million a year in the downloading. I was pointing out to the minister that the numbers were crunched by the then CAO, who was good enough for the minister to hire as one of your deputy ministers, and the minister still stood up and said, "Their numbers are wrong." That was it. That was the whole answer.

If that's what you're writing about, Minister, I hope that you'll tackle the issue dead on. Talk about contracting out. Tell us how you can justify continuing a plan of privatization that's going to have the effect of lowering wages, lowering the level of service and the quality of service the people of Ontario are going to receive and, assuming the auditor is correct, which we do, that will mean in three out of four cases Ontarians are losing money.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: You guys can moan and groan all you want, but there it is. It's in the auditor's report. Maybe those of you cackling away in the backbenches know better than the auditor, but what I read is right from his report.

Included in this bill—the reason I've raised this is that once again working people, people who work for a living, are in your target sites. In this case it's the employees of the Ontario Realty Corp, and I would think the mention of that entity ought to bring a little quiet over there, given some of the concerns that are floating about with regard to the ORC. Having been a former Solicitor General, I'm not going near any one of them, considering they're under review by certain institutions within our province.

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However, more important and more seriously and more to the point, Bill 14 now makes it very clear that as soon as an employee of the Ontario Realty Corp, under the Ontario Labour Relations Act, will lose their union completely—they can reorganize, but of course you've tightened up the organizing process so it is that much more difficult. At the end of the day, I suspect they will be organized, but my point is that you've decided in this bill that they're going to lose their union representation, they're going to lose successor rights. This is consistent with your approach that everybody in Ontario is protected if their business or service is sold and the contract goes with them, unless you're public sector, unless you work for the people directly through the province as the government, in which case, do you know what you get if your work is privatized by Mike Harris? Zip.

Interjections: No.

Mr Christopherson: Zip. You do. The contract is gone.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: I don't know why you find that so funny. I can tell you that people have lost their

seniority, people have lost their wages, people have lost their vacation—

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): That's fear-mongering.

Mr Christopherson: No, it's not fearmongering. You've already done it. You wouldn't know, but some of the other brighter lights around you might. The fact is that it has already been done. You voted for it and you don't even know what the hell you're voting for. Really, it's so frustrating. It's one thing to stand up and argue on the merits of the issue, but to tell me that it didn't happen makes me wonder where you were.

Bill 7 did exactly that. You took away the collective bargaining rights of provincial workers if their work is privatized, and in doing so they lose their job, they lose their vacation, they lose their seniority, they lose their health and safety rights, they lose everything. There's no contract, nothing, it's gone.

Now you've done the same thing to the employees of the Ontario Realty Corp. I've already pointed out to you that in doing this with road maintenance your experiment failed. It failed miserably. Now you're going to do the same thing to these workers.

I say to anybody who is watching, especially if you're not a public sector worker, if you think somehow that you're protected because you're not yet one of the victims of Mike Harris's anti-worker legislation, just wait, it will come. There's absolutely nothing special about people who aren't included in Bill 7 except that their time hasn't come up yet; their name and their occupation or their union or the work they do is just not in there.

At some point, given this government's propensity to level all playing fields, eventually somebody in the private sector is going to make the argument to the Minister of Labour of the day or Premier Mike Harris and say: "Why is it that if there's a new service available because of privatizing the public sector work, there's no union there, but I don't have that advantage if I buy a company outright on the market? Why is that?" Eventually there's going to be this argument about the level playing field, and I predict it's only a question of time before we also see the denial of successorship rights into the private sector.

I would plead with anyone watching: No one can afford to be smug by thinking, "That doesn't apply to me," because the odds are that something they're doing does. It's going to be negative, and if they haven't gotten to you, just wait, they will.

Further under Bill 14, this is an interesting one; this is quite interesting. Where you're amending the Financial Administration Act, you're violating one of your own promises, which confirms what a lot of us suspect: that notwithstanding the booming economy, you've got some real number problems. Some of this stuff just isn't working out the way you had hoped and figured. If you get caught short by virtue of the economy stalling or, God forbid, the stock market falling in any significant way, you've got serious revenue problems—not expenditure; revenue. And the revenue problems are your own

creation because you gave back billions of dollars in the tax cut.

But what do we have here? We have a promise in the Common Sense Revolution about asset sales that says: "The money we make from such asset sales will not go into the government accounts. Every penny will go directly to pay down the \$80-billion provincial debt." Well, guess what? You're going to amend the Financial Administration Act so that you can spend that money wherever you want. I wouldn't argue that as a standalone position that's so awful. That is not my point. My point is more that you make a big deal about making promises and then keeping them, and to a large degree the political nature of Ontario has changed as a result. I don't think there's nearly the same latitude that there once was for parties to knowingly state one thing, fully aware of the fact that if they won government they would have to make some moves.

I wouldn't give you all the credit for that because I think most of that stems from the fact that there's so much more information available now. In the past, if you go back not all that long ago, information was not as readily available; certainly not as many ordinary people would have it. Mostly it was politicians, lawyers, lobbyists, people in an individual industry and the like, who would know all of the details or enough to understand the change that would take place between a promise and what's delivered as a government.

But nonetheless the fact is that it was during your time that I think these pressures came to meet—and you got a lot of credit with a lot of people, even some who didn't vote for you. I'll go so far as to say that because I believe it is the truth. There are people who said that you deserve a lot of credit for at least keeping your promises. Most of us probably would have been happier to see you break more of them, because we disagree so much with them, but that's not the point. I don't mean to mitigate it; the fact is that I do believe that the nature of politics around that kind of thing has changed. I think you're getting the credit for it; most of that credit you deserve. However, the fact remains that here you're violating your promise, and you did that, to the best of my knowledge—I wasn't the finance critic at that time, but as I recall, during the budget presentation, when the numbers were analyzed, you took the—help me out, David. Was it \$3.1 billion net from the 407 sale?

Hon Mr Turnbull: Yes, \$3.1 billion.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, the \$3.1 billion net sale of Highway 407 you used as revenue for your 1999-2000 budget year, knowing full well that wouldn't be there in the next year. That's \$3.1 billion you've got to find somewhere else.

Hon Mr Turnbull: We will.

Mr Christopherson: The Minister of Transportation nods his head up and down and says, "We will." I appreciate your saying that, more because it just confirms the fact that what I remember is exactly correct, that indeed you did use asset sale from the 407 and rather than put it anywhere specifically or to the debt, as you promised you

would, you put it into revenue and it made your numbers look better. It inflated your revenue numbers.

Hon Mr Turnbull: That's less debt.

Mr Christopherson: No, no, you used it as revenue. Therefore you know that's not a renewable revenue, it's not a sustainable revenue, unless your game plan is to make up as much of that \$3.1 billion by continuing to make asset sales as you can. See, it doesn't seem like so much of a coincidence any more that we knew there was going to be this gap of at least \$3.1 billion that wouldn't be there in the 2000-01 budget year, and now you want to change your ability, break your promise and change the process so that you have the ability now to—actually you're just codifying what you're already doing, but nonetheless you said in the past that any asset sale would go directly to pay down the \$80-billion provincial debt, and that is no longer what you want to do under Bill 14. You now want the ability to say, "We can use this for anything," and obviously that would include revenue gaps.

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If that is incorrect, there's a minister in the House and a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, both of whom have the authority to speak on behalf of the government. If they want to go on the record saying that's not going to happen and that's not what it's all about, I'd love to hear that clearly articulated, I really would. If my speculation and suspicion are wrong, then you should be able to clearly state that. If you don't, if you even dance around it, I suspect I'm right. I'm clearly right in terms of breaking the promise, that's not hard to see, but whether or not it matches with your need for more and more provincial assets to sell to generate this money only time will really tell us.

By the way, just so the record is as up to date as it can be, the provincial debt that the government loves to rail about, like they are the only ones who ever cared about it or could do anything about it—

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): We are.

Mr Christopherson: Don't tempt me. I'll go back to my Mulroney numbers. I've got them with me.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Tell the rest of the story.

Mr Christopherson: I may do it anyway. I've got a little bit of time.

Under Harris, being the great economic growers that you are, on behalf of the people of Ontario, after you criticized us forever and a day, and the Liberals for that matter—although they really deserved it. I will agree with that. I still remember that \$25-million surplus turning into a \$3-billion deficit in the blink of an eye. But don't get cocky, because I'm going to talk about Manitoba. So be careful when we talk about surpluses and budgets and balanced budget legislation.

However, being the great economic growers that you are, I did want to ensure that you didn't lose the benefit of being noted for taking our debt from \$88 billion when you took office in 1995 and growing it to \$121 billion on

behalf of the people of Ontario, at the same time as you managed to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. What a legacy.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): Wow.

Mr Christopherson: The deficit would have been gone and the debt down a lot more, I say to the member from Stoney Creek, if your government, your pals in the last term of office, and you, as part of the current 20% cut, didn't give so many billions of dollars to the wealthy. Keep in mind that if you had not given the tax cut and not made one cut anywhere, you already would have had a balanced budget.

Mr Stewart: No jobs.

Mr Christopherson: I know it's a debatable point. I hear the member from wherever, right over there with his hand up, for the purpose of Hansard—

Mr Stewart: Peterborough.

Mr Christopherson:—the member from Peterborough saying, "Jobs." I think in his heart of hearts even he would admit that a lot of the buoyancy of the Canadian economy has to do with the American economy, which is just booming beyond belief. I at least acknowledge and respect the fact that we have a difference of opinion on that.

Mr Stewart: What about BC?

Mr Christopherson: I'll tell you what: We'll take turns. I'll talk and you listen and then you talk and I'll listen, but both of us talking isn't working.

Mr Clark: You're on a roll tonight.

Mr Christopherson: I'm trying to be.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I like this David Christopherson better than the one who shouts.

Mr Christopherson: You haven't made me mad yet.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Give him time.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, give me time.

I mentioned Manitoba. I hearken back to the comments I made the last time we were debating an economic matter. I was pointing out the Mulroney history of what happened to the debt under him and what happened with Reagan and what happened to virtually all of the provinces during the early 1990s.

My friend from Wentworth-Burlington, if I recall correctly—please correct me if I'm wrong—called me an apologist. That was his characterization of what I was doing, which I found rather surprising because I didn't consider myself to be apologizing for it but merely pointing out that for all the evil that you try to say was the sole responsibility of the Ontario NDP from 1990 to 1995, there was this global effect happening, certainly impacting everywhere across Canada, and the United States for that matter. All the provinces were running deficits, and their debts were going higher and higher.

I say, in an attempt not to look like an apologist, that it wasn't because they wanted to run those numbers; it was because they made a choice. Our government was no different. Being the biggest government, the biggest province in Canada, it's not surprising our numbers are so big. But if you look at the other provinces, relatively speaking we weren't that far out of whack. Some of it has

to do with commodity markets, given what some of the major exports are in other provinces, so it's not a straight apples-and-apples comparison. However, the trend lines are the same.

Deficits shot up in order to maintain and sustain a lot of the things that we look at as making up Ontario: our health care system, our education system, our transportation system, our environmental protection laws, our labour laws. All of those kinds of things require money when you go into a serious recession, as we did. I would again remind the honourable members that it was their federal cousins, under the leadership of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who refused to provide the usual kind of partnership support for provinces, which had been the tradition in Canada. At the same time, the free trade agreement kicked in, which yanked the rug out from under hundreds of thousands of decent, union-paying jobs.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I know those words upset you, but that is the reality. A lot of people were put out on the street, and because UI, which is now EI, was cut in terms of who can get access to it, a lot of those working people, not because they wanted to but because they were left with no choice, had to go on social assistance. So yes, the social assistance rates went up, but it was because of the number of people who were unemployed and no longer qualified for their own unemployment insurance, and that put them on social assistance.

Those are just some of the realities. So this is another reality.

People will recall that not long ago there was a very exciting election in Manitoba. I could talk about the Manitoba election for quite a while. It was a joy to watch. I'll share with you and I know my colleagues will just love this to death: It was late at night and I was sitting on the couch, watching TV, and I heard the words. They said on TV, "The NDP will form a majority government." I've got to tell you I stood up and did a little dance, looked at the TV and said, "Say it again; say it again," because I just loved to hear that.

Hon Mr Turnbull: You won't in BC.

Mr Christopherson: Well, some election nights are better than other election nights, as I've learned.

This was a good night for the NDP and, as it turns out, an even worse night for the Conservatives, and unfortunately for the people of Manitoba, because what has happened is that under the Tories—and let's remember, whether it's Mike Harris or Brian Mulroney or now Joe Clark, it doesn't matter. Once they get the label of "Tory," that arrogance of, "We're the only ones who know how to run the economy; we're the only business people," that whole attitude comes forward. It's just so sweet when these levellers, these equalizers, come out to show that there's nothing special about Tories managing anything. Ironically, one of the reasons—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: You said you were going to start thinking before you engaged your mouth in this session.

For your own good I ask you to take your own advice. But I miss you over here in the rump.

As I was saying, what is unfortunate—

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): You really miss me, don't you?

Mr Christopherson: Absolutely. It's hard to sleep at night.

What is unfortunate for the people of Manitoba and what was most interesting for us New Democrats in particular was that one of the reasons the Tories were turfed out was because of fiscal mismanagement. The people no longer had any faith that Gary Filmon and the Tories of Manitoba could properly manage the store. Interesting, since that's always the accusation that the Ontario Tories are hurling at the Ontario New Democrats.

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There was an independent study done. It wasn't the new government bringing in their people and manufacturing and massaging these numbers; they hired outside consultants who came in and found that instead of the promised and much-touted \$21.4-million surplus that the Tories were projecting in 1999-2000, it now would appear that rather than a \$21.4-million surplus, there is somewhere between a \$262-million and \$417-million deficit.

Interjection: Sounds like when you came in.

Mr Christopherson: Similar. But I think this has even the added benefit—I'll go this far—that it was a well-known, outside consulting firm with an international reputation which came up with these numbers. That pretty much closes the argument. The Liberals still dispute the numbers that we use, which is their right, but in this case the fact that they used an outside—which was pretty good politics too, quite frankly, especially for an NDP government. I think maybe they learned a little, watching what happened over here. My point in raising this once again—I did it in the last speech that I gave on these issues—is that the difference between what the Tories in Ontario talk about and the reality of what is, is night and day.

My friend from Stoney Creek wasn't here in the last Parliament, but if he had been he would remember clearly, as I'm sure the member for Wentworth-Burlington does, Bill 49, which was the Employment Standards Act, the best example. It was introduced in the House and we were told, "Oh, don't worry, that's only minor housekeeping matters." Just coincidentally, all the major Ontario labour leaders happened to be at the other end of the country at a national conference, and they were assured, "Don't worry, it's only minor housekeeping matters." Sometimes bills are; sometimes there are things that are just cleaning up the numbers, bringing the formulas up to date, changing some expiry dates, and they really are housekeeping. As much as we might try to fearmonger as much as possible around everything, it would appear to you, there are some things we acknowledge are merely housekeeping, and this was supposedly one of them.

We got into it and I started looking through this thing and, my God, there were workers' rights flying out the window hand over fist. Eventually we ended up with four weeks of public hearings where the government got trashed, because that's exactly what they were doing. And yet it was introduced as minor housekeeping. "Don't get upset, don't worry about it."

It's so important for anyone watching this government to take the time and make the effort to go one step beyond just what's on the bumper sticker, one step beyond whatever the name of the bill is that's scrolling across the bottom of the screen as we all speak. They actually have introduced bills in this place that have been entitled—and again I'm not attempting to quote directly but I'm not far off—"Environmental Protection Act." Good God, anybody who knows anything about the environment—this ought to come as a particularly important point to you, member for Stoney Creek, where under the guise of environmental protection as its title, which is what would scroll along the bottom of the screen again, they were yanking away years and years of protection for the environment that the previous Tory government and, yes, the previous Liberal government and the previous NDP government had either supported and funded or even built upon. You've done the same thing in virtually every single area that you've gone in.

I was so pleased to see the auditor take the approach that he did. I want to say that I think it's just the beginning. You cannot cut the amount of money that you have, over these last five years and a bit, in so many key areas of our society and not expect that at some point the truth is going to rear its head. This is the first of many.

The shell game that you play with education is really quite frustrating. Every one of you is very careful, as you've been instructed, to use the phrase "classroom spending"—real careful about that. They don't say "education," because on a per capita basis they're funding education less than previous governments. But what they do is talk about classroom spending, which allows them, on a technicality, to accurately say, "We have increased the funding for classroom spending." Obviously I've never been to one, but I'll bet a lot of the rookie MPPs sitting here were at the candidates' school that the party put on and it was rammed into them, "If you're talking education, don't talk about anything except classroom spending," because that's the only place with the idea of any expansion of funds.

How does this work? It's a shell game of the most obvious kind: They redefine what classroom spending is. There's now so little involved in classroom spending that all they have to do is identify those few items that are still left in what is considered by definition "classroom spending," be sure they're increased even nominally and then you can proceed to cut transportation costs, you can cut transfer payments. Heat and hydro in the classroom are not classroom spending. Cleaning the classroom is not classroom spending. All of these areas have been devastated but, by definition, all the good little Tory backbenchers can run around and say, "We increased

classroom spending." Yet the reality is that when you take a look at what you've done, you haven't done anything to enhance education; all you've done is put together an elaborate scam—and it is a scam—to try to cover up the damage that ripping billions and billions of dollars out of the revenue of the province to give to your rich friends is causing. That's what's happening.

Now, here we are. Part of what Bill 14 is going to do is implement further the tax cuts. By the way, I'm sure my friend from Peterborough will be interested to know that it's no longer just 25% of the tax benefit that the top 6% income earners are getting as a result of your gift; it's now 36% of that amount they're receiving. Life gets better for those who already have; for everybody else, I'm not so sure. The longer you're in office, the more we're sure it's not as many people.

Now you're at the 20%. Why did we see \$300 million announced the other day being cut, money that we can't afford to cut? It's not efficiencies. You know that. There was a good piece on OnTV at 6 o'clock about the privatization of the jails and what the implications are there. First of all, they're happening because philosophically they like the idea: "If it moves, privatize it." They have this blind belief that if it's public it's bad and inefficient and if it's private it's good and totally efficient, which is absolute nonsense. Things can be inefficient whether they're in private hands or public hands. That's not the issue. The issue is how things are managed and what service you're providing.

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I don't want to see our police services or our fire departments run on some kind of a for-profit basis, but I do want to make sure that when any Hamiltonian dials 911, both those services are there for them. I remind the members that the police were here last week lobbying us on matters that they care about. One of their big concerns is the privatization of policing. Yes, that's because the police union has an interest in making sure that their numbers stay as big as they can. There's nothing wrong with that, there's nothing evil, and I don't see them attempting to hide it. It doesn't change the fact that they, like us, are worried about what privatization in police services will mean for public safety. But because you're on another roll, with another 20% tax cut on top of the 30%, the money has got to come from somewhere, and so the \$300 million announced was but one step. We've still got at least \$600 million more to go just to pay for your tax cut.

What happens if the whole economy goes into the ditch tomorrow? Are you still going to keep your promise and do the tax cut and then cut \$900 million and God knows how many more hundreds of millions of dollars in order to pay for it? It would be nice if they at least acknowledged that there's a legitimate debate happening among economists, among other people on the right wing, about whether or not the 30% tax cut had any really significant role to play in the current economic boom that we enjoy versus how much of that is a result of the American economy booming, where 80% of our

exports go. Much of what we produce here in Ontario is for export, ergo our economy does well, rather than what you've done, which is really just a repackage, trickle-down theory, supply-side economics advocated by Thatcher and Reagan. If that's the case, then I would ask the question that Americans asked themselves when it was happening there: Has anybody out there been trickled on lately?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Questions and comments.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I'd like to just point out a few items to my good friend the member for Hamilton West. I believe it is correct political language to say they were terminological inexactitudes at least. His statement, regarding the auditor's report, that I said the auditor was wrong, and he pointed to Hansard—well, I'll direct him to the page, page 495 on November 16. I defy him to find anywhere that I made such a statement. Perhaps he's making the mistake of reading the Toronto Star as his information. They tried to get me to say it, and I said no, not at all.

The point I was making is that financing costs of capital which are incurred with respect to road maintenance equipment were not considered, because they were paid for by the Ministry of Finance. We believe we're doing the right thing. Indeed, a paper that was published by the federal government in 1989 directs us to this practice with regard to considering outsourcing. It's called total cost accounting, and two major accounting companies have confirmed this practice. We in fact now use PSAAB accounting, which is something the NDP didn't use. But I would point out that theirs was the government whose books the auditor refused to sign one year—totally, utterly didn't. With due respect, it was a wonderful debate, but it wasn't correct, any of the things you were saying.

Also, maintenance standards are monitored by our ministry with respect to all contracts, and they are the same standard as they were when road maintenance was done by our ministry, and it is monitored. They are as good now or better than they were before.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I want to compliment the member for Hamilton West, and I'm glad to have an opportunity to respond to the minister as well.

In his response to my question last week, he talked about comparing apples and oranges. But what we know is that the auditor was very clear about the fact that the savings you had guaranteed would be there before you did any privatization were not there. You can't dispute that without saying, indeed, you think the auditor is wrong or the auditor is simply—I won't use the word we can't use in the Legislature. The fact is that the auditor was very clear about that.

But, perhaps more significantly, I think the important thing the auditor really directed us to be concerned about was the aspect of safety on our roads. He indicated that he thought the patrols were too long, there was too large an area being covered to safely monitor what was being done. I know that, whether you're doing the outsourcing.

What we do know—and we do know this is true—is that the standards for maintenance began to decline in about 1996—it's very true—when this government came into power. I personally put forward a private member's bill to try to at least maintain standards, which the government members wouldn't support. The reason was that I was concerned, certainly as a member from northern Ontario, from the district of Thunder Bay and from the new riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North. We have a lot of roads, and we really feel the maintenance standards have declined incredibly, and we're very worried about it.

I want to compliment the member for Hamilton West for his passionate remarks, as always. What I really want to say is that we are going to be watching very carefully. We know, because the auditor was very clear about it, and the auditor is an impartial observer of the process, that indeed no money has been saved. But more significantly, it has been made very clear to us that we should have real concerns about the safety on our roads. We're going to watch it very carefully, because there's no question that people deserve to have the highest of standards in their winter road maintenance, let alone all year around. It's something we need to fight to protect, and, believe me, we will continue to do that.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): I want to congratulate the member from Hamilton West. He gave one of his usual impassioned speeches, and I wrote down some of the words he used. He says that we "screwed" people. He hears "moaning and groaning" from this side of the House. He alleges "violations." He observes "massaging." He says, "Don't tempt me." He says he misses the member from Brampton Centre; he can't sleep at night. What is he saying here?

I think what he's suggesting with his terminology is that the members of this House are some kind of sinners, and he even outlines what the sin is. What is the sin? He says the sin is, number 1, we keep our promises. He says that's the great sin for the members of this House: We keep our promises. We've indicated in two elections what our promises are, what our commitments are, and then we keep them. He says we have to get credit for that, and the public has changed because they expect that.

Then he goes on to what our second sin is, and again, it's not what you would think using that terminology. Our second sin is that we gave back billions of dollars. They don't belong to us; they belong to the public, the people of Ontario.

Another mistake the member makes, in my opinion, is that he says, "You know, these tax cuts are costing you billions of dollars." That's the NDP mantra. The truth of the matter is—and it's in our budget and it's audited. He mentions the auditor. The fact of the matter is that we are getting in revenues \$6 billion more than we started out with. So our great sin is that we're fiscally responsible, we're making more money and we're giving back money.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I welcome the opportunity to respond and congratulate the member from

Hamilton West on his presentation. I believe he carried on for some 20-odd minutes with a good repertoire, concentrating on the budget presented by the government. I have to say that the budget as presented by the government, and of course the response which we had from the Auditor General, confirms the fear that we have mentioned to this government time and time again. Even some of the ministers themselves have been saying in the House that some of the cuts they have to make are to help the Minister of Finance accomplish what they should have done three years ago, and that is balance the books, and still they cannot do it.

Why can't they do it? I think we will be the last province in Canada to balance our books. I think we are five years behind the federal government in balancing the books. Why is that? Because they have made a terrible election promise to give a 30% tax cut to the people who don't need it, and now they have the problem of finding the money. Where is the money going to come from? More cuts. Why is that? Because the savings they said they were going to accomplish are not there. That is why now it is not only costing more, but they have to cut even deeper to accomplish that particular goal. Even so, they are not even close balancing the books.

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The Acting Speaker: Response, the member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: I thank the members who took the time to comment on my remarks. I appreciate the member for York West emphasizing that the auditor's report goes a long way to dispelling the myths the government promotes.

The Minister of Transportation, if I wrote it down correctly, said "terminological inexactitudes"? I will look at the Hansard. I know you had a chance to read them. My dad taught me, "Trust everybody, but cut the cards," so I'll check the Hansard while other people are debating tonight and get back to you before we leave.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: We'll see about that.

The member for Thunder Bay-Superior North mentioned safety on the roads and I'm really glad he did. That's an important part of what's happening here. We just know that when you privatize and go into non-union circumstances, the level of training for health and safety is much less. So yes, it's not only dollars lost to the people of Ontario; the quality of service is down for the people of Ontario, plus the risk to health and safety of the workers involved has also gone up exponentially. I appreciate him raising that important point.

Last, to my friend from Wentworth-Burlington, who took what appears to be great joy in jotting down some interesting phrases I may have used, I couldn't help but think, given the track record of some of the backbench Tories in the motherland, that I'm not so sure he wants to go waltzing down that road in any way, shape or form, so I would suggest he rethink that.

Let me also say to the member on a serious note, though, I heard his point. He was basically saying that I

was blaming them for keeping their promises and, ha-ha, what a stupid argument to make. My point actually was that you're breaking your promises because now, under Bill 14, you are reversing something you promised in the Common Sense Revolution. So quite the contrary, Honourable Member: You're violating your own promise, and that was the point I was bringing out.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate, the member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to use up some of the clock tonight and help to share with the people of Ontario the ordinary view—

Applause.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you. I'm embarrassed and humbled by the respect shown by the members on the other side of the House.

I want to pick up on one remark made by the member from Hamilton Centre, which I think is a very good starting point. He admitted that we are giving money back to people. That's a premise that will pervade most of the initiatives of this government, to give the hard-working families of this province some of their money back. All through my comments this evening, while I'm speaking for the riding of Durham, I'm also speaking on behalf of our Minister of Finance and our Premier and the cabinet, that we are intent and firmly resolved to cut taxes.

On November 16 our finance minister, Ernie Eves, introduced this rather small, innocuous bill, Bill 14, which does have a number of sections—I think there are 22 sections—which I intend to review in some detail this evening. So stay tuned. Some of it is rather dry and technical in nature, but nonetheless I'll try to bring it down to the common man's language, which represents many of the people from this caucus.

A number of initiatives were called for by the stakeholder groups—the municipalities and small business people, not the least of which would be the agricultural community—to re-examine and enhance some of the changes we have made.

I can tell you in Durham they are moving forward on a number of the changes themselves, specifically in part I. As I said, part I deals with the Ambulance Act. In this, we're extending the opportunity to January 1, 2000, for municipalities to come to some agreement on the delivery of ambulance services within their area. This notice has been provided to municipalities to allow them to engage—and I know Durham is a leader in this. Durham region has already formed a contract and, from talking to people both in council and in the public, they're pleased and assured that there will be tax savings because of the streamlining and reorganization of what was to some extent fragmented around a number of communities with different contracts.

The other one that I believe is very important is part II, the Assessment Act changes. It's allowing regulations to be made for current value of land in certain property classes. I will speak to that section a little bit later on as I

move into some of the detail, but I'm just giving a broad outline of the legislation.

One of them is the capital investment plan. Under this section is the amendment to provide in the act that "employees continue to be protected from personal liability for acts and omissions done in good faith." So this legislation isn't done without regard to those public service employees and other employees who need to be protected under this particular section of the Capital Investment Plan Act, 1993.

Another one is the Commodity Futures Act—a little bit more complicated, but that explains a great section of this bill. Much of this is harmonizing the regulations so they look very much like the Securities Act, so there's no misrepresentation and more consistency in the language between those two bills.

I'm quite impressed with this particular one: the community small business investment fund. The small business investment fund is exactly that. It's creating labour-sponsored funds. I think your government started those. These become resources of capital to grow small business and create opportunity. I think there are some very good regulations in there. Reducing the amount of capital that's required to start up the fund is very important. In fact, middle-class and lower-income people are now able to participate in a registered retirement savings plan in a small business investment environment, thereby creating jobs, in many cases creating small businesses. I can tell you that sector has been a success. I commend Minister Palladini for working to create opportunities and partnerships in Ontario.

The Corporations Tax Act is a section I won't be covering—it's a long section—but I will be covering the employer health tax. It's a little section dealing with the threshold, where some small businesses were being penalized for the way they were structured, as a small business corporation, with a threshold of \$600,000. There are some amendments in there to ensure that more small businesses actually benefit from the changes in Bill 14—a very long-overdue and necessary change.

Under the financial administration, part XI, you'll find that there are about four sections in here and they deal mainly with the regulatory responsibility under the minister. I think that's a very important commitment.

If I look back on the very premise or platform this party ran on, it was clearly that tax cuts create jobs. Part XII clearly outlines a schedule to reduce personal income tax from 40.5%—that reflects the 30% reduction from our last term—and we're moving forward, you'll be happy to note, so everyone who pays taxes will see more money in their paycheque, with the possible exception that the federal government might claw it back. Paul Martin is very good at articulating through the CPP premiums and, as we know, there's a \$28-billion surplus in the EI fund. All of that money has been taken by the federal government. I look at my paycheque: 30% tax cut, no change. Guess what? The feds took it. Actually, it's Jean Chrétien. Jean Chrétien's government has clawed back any savings.

But our Premier is committed to moving the tax rate down to 38.5% by the tax year in our mandate. I can be assured that this, along with the Ontario child tax credit supplement for working families, is also being increased—the amount of money going to working families with children, so they have more disposable income to make decisions about how to take care of the day care issues and the children nutrition issues that we all hear about in the early learning program.

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Again, there's the land transfer tax, which certainly affects first-time homebuyers. I will be commenting at some length on how we've increased the allowance for young working families to buy that first home and to get the break on the land transfer tax credit.

The Municipal Act: There are a number of changes there as well. These are primarily to streamline assessment and tax-sharing between the provincial and municipal levels of government. Some of them are, I admit from my reading on this, retroactively looking at some eight or nine bills under municipal finance. Some of these are further refinements.

The job's never done, of continually responding to and reflecting what both the public and the municipal clerks and treasurers are saying. I know our Minister of Finance is moving forward with important changes and amendments to legislation that has been passed. The job is never done, it's clear.

There are other sections here; I'm at 22. With that time—as I say, I'm limited here; I've only got a few minutes—but I want to go back to the beginning. An important place to start is to always check out the motive. Why am I here representing the people from Cadmus, Caesarea, Columbus and Courtice, to name but four? I'm here to listen and speak up for them. Parliamentarian: The very word means to speak up, and that's entirely what I'm doing tonight.

Everyone in Ontario, every voter in Ontario, every person who's perhaps interested in this process of governance, knows that our government does what we promise. And do they want to know what we promised?

Well, it was called the Blueprint, and I'm not trying to politicize this debate but certainly they know that our Premier will hold our feet to the fire, if you will, and the voters will too. I can tell you that in my riding—I could name people here now but it's not appropriate that I name individuals—people call me on a weekly basis and they want to know my position on legislation. I'm pleased, in this capacity, to be responding to them publicly on the record in Hansard. We're accountable, and that's part of it.

But I think the main thing was balancing the budget, dealing with the whole issue of making sure that we stop governments from spending money with no responsible reason. I think the Balanced Budget Act which we dealt with is a commitment, not just by the Premier and cabinet, to make sure that we go to the people and ask them if they want us to tax more.

I call on my federal counterparts, not just Paul Martin but certainly Alex Shepherd is a federal Liberal member—103 of them, I think, in Ontario—to be responsible and tell Paul Martin to actually give the people their money back, much like Mr Christopherson, the member from Hamilton Centre, said. And he wouldn't be alone. Alex Shepherd from my riding of Durham wouldn't be alone.

Roger Gallaway from southwest Ontario says, "You know, the red book is not the bible in the end." He's a Liberal; they don't keep their promises. So the red book isn't the bible. What is the bible? That's what we're always dealing with: trying to deliver on our promises.

I'll tell you what I'm hearing in my riding: 50% of our surplus should be tax cuts and 50% debt. Clearly, they've got the message.

Looking through some comments to speak to tonight, I know that I watched with some interest the federal election and I also watched with some interest the sort of change in tone at the NDP level. I commend Alexa McDonough for listening.

At the Ottawa convention in August this summer, clearly, she said, "The new Canadian way"—and I'm quoting here; policy platform adopted by the NDP—"calls for fiscal responsibility, tax relief, balanced budgets, good relations with small and medium-sized businesses" They finally got the message.

They finally got the message, and I think the member from Hamilton Centre had it right in most of his speech.

Interjections: Hamilton West.

Mr O'Toole: Hamilton West, pardon me. The member from Hamilton West admits that we're giving the money back. After all, if you want to give it back, people can make choices. Today's people are well educated, well informed to make choices on how to spend their money. I've got a number of supporters in this particular package, and I could go on at length and name names of people who want—

Interjection: Go ahead.

Mr O'Toole: I could name a number of names. I think most of the press right now—I've got Alexa McDonough, and even Allan Rock is in there talking about tax cuts. The only one you really have to listen to is our Premier, Mike Harris, and our Finance Minister, Ernie Eves, will certainly be there.

I will just briefly read here his introduction of Bill 14. I think it's worth putting it on the record. Basically, we are on course for "the first instalment of the 20% income tax cut referred to in this past May's budget." Another promise made and a promise kept. "It will take care of the Ontario child care supplement for working families. It will extend and expand the land transfer tax refund on first-time homebuyers of new homes.

"It will deliver on the retail sales tax rebate on building materials for farmers," a very important sector, often not mentioned but very important. This is a sector that needs our support more than ever, certainly in my riding of Durham. "It will provide enhanced capital tax exemption for small businesses." I mentioned the labour-

sponsored investment fund. "It will provide incentives for businesses hiring apprentices."

There is a lot in this legislation that deserves your attention, and it deserves your support. I call on all parties here, unanimously, to put down their weapons, give this a good, close look and support the legislation.

"It will present incentives for Ontario school bus safety." There is a capital tax schedule in here which allows them to depreciate school buses more quickly, for safety for our children. So it's here in the fine-print language.

It's a large bill, as I said, but it's worth the read. It's an excellent Saturday night or Sunday afternoon read, it really is. It's full of tax cuts and promises that we've made.

"It will also level the playing field in the area of property taxation for newly constructed commercial and industrial properties." I'm in Durham, where there's a lot of growth; it's one of the fastest-growing areas in all of Ontario. Any time a small business—in fact, I'm dealing with one right now in Port Perry, where they are putting an expansion on. He's coming to me and he's saying, "What's the assessment?" There is clear language in here to define, in regulation, the process of going about looking at surrounding properties of similar uses and size to come up with a current value assessment for a new property. I think there's very important clarity in that particular section.

It's important that I look to what has been said in some of the questions that have been raised with me, but I do want to get down to one section here that I said I would talk to some extent about, that is, the increase in the maximum benefit under the Ontario child tax supplement for working families. It is being increased from \$1,020 to a maximum of \$1,100, each year, for each child under the age of seven, effective July 1, 1999. There you have it. There is more money, as the member from Hamilton—

Mr Christopherson: West.

Mr O'Toole: —West said. Actually, he is a little bit from the west, really.

More people getting their money back, that's what this bill does.

I mentioned as well the changes to the community small business investment fund. I particularly like this one. I think providing people with encouragement to invest in their own communities and in small business is the way of the future. The large corporate empire is something that needs to be given a whole new lease on life. Some of these small business people will become the large businesses of the future. They need that start-up equity. It reduces the minimum equity capital contribution for community small business investments by a labour-sponsored investment fund or a qualifying financial institution from 50% to 25%. That's an important opportunity.

It reduces the minimum amount of equity capital required to register a small business from \$5 million to \$2 million. Again, you don't need as large a pool of

capital to get the investment fund started—absolutely critical for small business.

I really like a couple of the next ones. I've only got a few minutes left. How time flies when you're having fun.

I think the important thing here is families. I look at my area of Durham, and in that area Courtice is one of the fastest growing, as is Bowmanville; two of the fastest-growing communities in all of Canada. There are a lot of new families, first-time homebuyers. This program increases the maximum refund for newly constructed homes from \$1,725 to \$2,000, effective for agreements of sale entered into as of March 31, 1999.

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A very important sector, and I repeat this every time I'm in the House, is the agricultural sector. One particular constituent comes to mind, a whole family farm that has been in business for years. It's the Frew family. I hate to mention people's names, but the Frew family, slowly but surely, with their family, their sons and daughters and daughters-in-law and sons-in-law, have grown a successful small business. I would say it's probably 3,000 to 4,000 acres. They're in pork, and of course they went through a difficult time, but they're also in corn and cash cropping as well.

This says, "The temporary sales tax rebate on building materials for farm buildings has been extended permanently." So there you have it right there. Retail sales tax that would normally have been spent by the taxpayer is now more money to go back into the business, in fact, to put the seeds in the ground that grow the stock which makes the bread which we eat. Thank you, farmers of Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Absolutely. You can see it right there. It's the transcending thing.

They've increased the rebate of sales tax on heritage properties to a maximum of up to \$3,000. Coming from villages like Newcastle and Hampton, I look around at the wonderful history of these communities. We need to have programs in place that sustain and ensure respect for our heritage properties. The small town of Newcastle, for instance, with the Massey family and some of the buildings in that community—I was the first to advise LACAC, the local architectural conservation advisory committee, of this important change. I see Mr Gerretsen in Kingston would also like to advise his constituents that this government is giving people tax money in their pockets to create hope and opportunity for the future.

It's unfortunate to have only covered a couple of small areas, but our plan is on track. Our plan involves giving people their money back and committing this government to responsible, effective delivery of programs at an affordable price. If I had a chance, I would certainly go on, and maybe that would just be that; I would just be going on.

The job of controlling government spending actually never ends. It's a relentless activity, and this government and our cabinet members, many of them here tonight, never give up the challenge of trying to do more with

less. I know I'm part of a team that's committed to doing what it promised. I'm confident that all of the tax measures implemented in Bill 14 will improve the economy and create jobs, hope and opportunity. I wish there was some time to share with members, but I'll certainly be looking for responses, specifically to the context of what I was saying. With that, I will give up the floor.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): In response to the member for Durham, this is a budget bill, after all, and I want to talk about some of the broad figures that were in the budget.

Let's talk about the province's debt, first of all. This government has taken the province's debt up \$21 billion since it took office. That is over four years. We have a measurement of the impact of the debt on our province. When this government took office, the debt-to-GDP ratio was 28.8%; today it's 31.9%.

Another important fact is that there are four major credit rating agencies in North America. They downgraded Ontario's credit rating after the Liberals left office. They downgraded it three times under the NDP. That downgrading brought us to AA-. I remember watching on television, because I was always interested in what the now government members had to say. I remember them ranting and raving about the credit rating. Well, it has been four years now that they've been in office, and we have the same credit rating as we had when they took office in 1995. According to the credit rating agencies, not to partisan groups, it's because of their allowing the debt to grow so much, so fast, and the prospect for further debt reduction isn't good. So four years later, we have that.

The last budget figure that I think is particularly significant—I know the member for Durham will know this—is that Ontario, other than British Columbia, is the only province that hasn't balanced its budget, the only one. You could have done that two years ago. There is room for tax cuts when there's a surplus. We need solutions. We don't need a Common Sense Revolution. We need a solution revolution. We need solutions to the 39 hospitals you closed that you promised not to close. So your track record is not great. You've benefited from strong exports and strong international economies.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the remarks of the member for Durham. He's having so much trouble remembering my riding. I would suggest to him to think of it this way: It used to be Hamilton Centre, and now it's Hamilton West, and that's because Mike Harris took mine so I took one of his. That's one way maybe you can remember it. I think it was right about here where it was, actually, for that matter.

Let me comment on the member's remarks earlier on in his comments, when he talked about my comment of giving it back, the whole idea that he thought this was a good thing. I have to tell him, it's not the idea of giving it back or not giving it back, it's really how much is going to whom. If you make \$250,000 a year, you're going to get—what?—roughly \$25,000 or \$26,000 after tax. That

is real money, 26 grand. If your family income is in the average range, so you'd be around \$40,000, \$45,000 or \$50,000, you're hardly going to notice it, especially if you start adding up the user fees you're paying, the municipal services you've lost, the copayments that your now Premier—who when he was leader of the third party over here said a copayment is a copayment is a tax, and a tax is a tax is a tax, but when he became Premier, suddenly copayments weren't taxes.

It's not just the fact that money is going back, that suddenly we can't handle that—I would prefer, if you're going to do it, to talk more about provincial sales tax—but it's whom you're giving it to, how much they're getting and how others are having to pay to give that money to people who don't need it in the first place.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): It gives me particular pleasure to rise to speak on behalf of my colleague from Durham, who made such an eloquent speech on behalf of Bill 14, which does talk about and is entitled, actually, More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity. In fact, what we could translate that into is, "More Tax Cuts for More Jobs, More Growth and More Prosperity Act," actually.

When we were first elected back in 1995, each ministry was asked to undergo a business plan, and there were certain and basic principles that evolved as a result of that business planning exercise. One of them was that ministries had to develop performance measures, and they had to identify what their core businesses were. Strategies should be results-oriented, and results should be measurable.

When we look at this particular bill, and what my colleague from Durham speaks to is, are there some identifiable results that we can refer to? Very quickly, I think it's important to emphasize the jobs that have been created in this province since 1995. There have been 600,000 net new jobs that have been created. Tax cuts have clearly been welcomed by the average taxpayer in Scarborough, and there are many Scarborough success stories that we've taken since 1995, not the least of which is the development of the Scarborough Town Centre, which created over 400 construction jobs. I could give you all kinds of examples with those results.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm going to comment at this time on some of the statements that were made by the member for Wentworth-Burlington—I think I heard them again from the member for Durham—to the effect that the government has given back billions of dollars to the people of Ontario, that they are making more money and giving more money back to the people. But what they forget to add, the very important part they're forgetting to add, is that they're borrowing more money. They're mortgaging the future of our children, who will already own a mortgage when they graduate from university because of the cuts of this government. That's what they forget to add.

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I have to comment also about the statements made about the great favours the government is doing for farmers. Coming from a part of the province where I have occasion to speak with farmers regularly, certainly what comes to me from members of that community is the great concern and consternation they've had with the cuts that ministry has experienced at the hands of this government. Field offices have been closed and they have to drive much farther to access information and services that were once provided much more conveniently to them. They're very upset about the cuts this government has delivered to the 4-H program, a very important program within rural Ontario, a program that supports rural children. This government has cut the heart and soul out of the 4-H program.

I think it's quite unconscionable that you stand up and talk about the budget in such glowing terms when people in my riding have suffered significantly as a result of the cuts that this government has introduced in its budget.

Mr O'Toole: I would just like to respect all of the members who stood up. At least it shows they were here and they were listening and participating. That's their duty.

The member for Windsor-St Clair, I'm surprised—he was here tonight—lost his political ties, it would appear. That's what I observed as he was speaking. He's saying we still haven't balanced the budget. Perhaps he should speak to Paul Martin. When you look at the EI issue, that's \$28 billion. We're 60% of the economy of this country. Clearly, a good portion of that EI surplus belongs to the hard-working families of Ontario. He doesn't get it.

The member from "Hamilton left"—actually it's Hamilton, left on the political spectrum. I know it's Hamilton West, but the west is on the left if you're looking north. That's where I was going wrong. He still doesn't get it, as well. I have to realize that even in their plan, Clearly on Your Side—or in your pocket; that was their platform—all it talked about was spending, and actually increasing taxes was how you pay for that spending. To remind members, we're on the record with 69 tax cuts, so the job isn't done, I'm clear.

I was most impressed with the member for Scarborough Centre. She talked about renaming this large bill—dealing with trying to improve the economy is really what it's about. She tried to give it another name. I look at the back and it says the short title is More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act. You had it right. You've read this bill, I can tell.

It's like any sequel. This is like Tax Cuts II. It's sort of like a sequel of the Austin Powers movie, you might say. His first movie was International Man of Mystery, and I think the second movie could have been called The Spy Who Taxed Too Much.

On a serious level, to the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington: Yes, I speak to farmers, and I know that Harry Danford, when he was here, spoke for farmers as well.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I am very pleased to join this debate today.

I'll tell you about one group of people that isn't interested in tax cuts. I'm talking about the 240 people who lost their jobs at Celanese in Millhaven today. Some 240 people, most of them in their 50s, who have worked at this plant for the last 30 years or so, lost their jobs. Ask them about tax cuts. It will be very interesting to see what this government, through its Minister of Labour and through its other cabinet members, is prepared to do for these elderly workers who have given their lifetime to make sure that plant was operating since 1955.

I was somewhat surprised by the press release today, "Celanese AG and KoSa Sign Agreement." It says, "Celanese is seeking to enhance shareholder value by divesting non-core assets, restructuring our current operations and taking advantage of growth opportunities.... The sale of the Millhaven plant will allow us to focus our resources more intensively on our core chemicals, acetate products and technical polymers businesses."

What it doesn't say anything about is the people who lost their jobs there, who will be out of work in mid-February. At least show some compassion and some understanding. I hope that the members of your caucus will go after the cabinet ministers and say, "Look, we've got to do something for these people." Get the Minister of Labour involved.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): Are they closing it?

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, they are closing the polyester division of this plant, and these people will be out of a job come mid-February. Don't ask them about tax cuts. I'm sure that they would be more than willing to give up whatever tax cut they may have received, and that hasn't been reduced by increased user fees, if they could still have their jobs.

Mr Murdoch: Were you the mayor in Millhaven?

Mr Gerretsen: No, actually, this is located in the riding of my colleague from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, although the people who work at this plant live in both of our ridings.

It will be interesting to see what the government is prepared to do about the situation to assist these people, because that's what government should be all about. It should be about helping people in need, to level the playing field for people so that we all have an equal opportunity and an equal chance in life, not just the favoured few. That's a fact.

I always like to use the government's own documents, for the simple reason that presumably you believe in your own figures, to deal with this whole notion once again—and I know it's been mentioned here ad nauseam—about the public debt in this province. Look at your own 1999 budget document. That's what this bill, after all, is all about. What does it say? On page 57: The public debt in this province was at \$88 billion in 1995 and it's expected to be \$121 billion, and that includes \$8 billion of the Ontario Hydro debt; taking the Hydro debt off,

\$113 billion as of the end of this year—an increase of \$25 billion.

It's also very interesting to note that this table goes back to 1990, which is when the NDP took over. The public provincial debt at that point in time was \$42 billion. I acknowledge that about \$10 billion of that was added on during the Peterson years, but the first \$32 billion of that was during the Davis years and all the preceding years. So it's interesting to note that out of the \$113 billion of public debt that we have, \$103 billion of it was caused by the New Democrats and by the Conservative governments in this province. I don't think the people of Ontario ought to forget that.

The other very interesting figure that I always point to, and people are always surprised by this, is how much interest we pay on the public debt in this province. This year it's going to be \$9.2 billion, over a \$2-billion increase from what it was in 1995, and that's even with low interest rates. With all the complaints that you people have about what we pay for social services—I talk to many Tories in my riding as well and there's always something said about social services—we spend more annually on interest on the public debt, \$9.1 billion, than we do on all the social services that the province pays for, which is some \$7.9 billion. So let's put the facts as they are and let's deal with the issues.

The other thing I find very interesting is that in your Bill 14 you once again deal with another property tax amendment. I know that members of the government, as do members of the opposition, get asked by many people in your ridings who are paying commercial and industrial taxes, "When are we going to get our final 1999 tax bill?" In most communities in my riding it hasn't been issued yet. Here we are, a month away from December 31.

You remember the tremendous problems that were created last year when there were seven different tax bills passed and all of them were incorrect. All of them were incompetently put forward and implemented by the Minister of Finance. It got so bad, actually, that earlier this year many people got revised bills for their 1998 taxes. They couldn't understand it. They thought they had finally got a break or were finally paying the right amount, when all of a sudden a lot of these people with commercial and industrial properties got revised tax bills for 1998, increasing the amount tremendously.

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If you people were able to explain that adequately to your taxpayers who were involved in those kinds of situations, I'd like to know what your story was, because it is almost incomprehensible that you could have allowed that to happen, particularly when there were organizations around such as AMO and the clerks and treasurers who were telling you two years ago how to implement this. Remember, these are people, particularly the people involved with the clerks and treasurers of Ontario, who basically are not politically involved. They are the implementers of local decisions.

Mr Stewart: Yes, they are, and you know it.

Mr Gerretsen: I see. OK. Now they're saying they are partisan appointees. Tell that to your clerks and treasurers. Sir, for the life of me I cannot understand why you didn't listen to the people who deal with these taxation problems on a day-to-day basis. They would have told you how to implement it and it wouldn't have gotten you into the kind of mess you've been in for the last two years and that you're still in today because you are still making some changes to the tax legislation.

The other interesting thing is the fact that, yes, there is one good thing in this bill. That deals with the land transfer tax. I'm all in favour of providing rebates to first-time homebuyers. The problem is that you have limited it to just first-time homebuyers of new homes. The question I get asked quite frequently is, "Why shouldn't it apply to first-time homebuyers of existing homes?" If you know anything about economics, it doesn't matter whether you buy a new house or an existing house, you're going to create movement in the housing market. Why you are discriminating against people who are buying a house for the first time, but it doesn't happen to be a new house and therefore you're not giving them back the land transfer tax, is beyond me. What's good for one is good for the other. I believe the Minister of Finance even acknowledged that in a question on this issue in the previous House, back in April or May of this year. Why didn't you extend the plan so you could be fair to all first-time homebuyers in the province?

The other thing that's very insulting is the way you're treating municipalities in this bill. There is a section, and I'm sure you're quite familiar with it, that basically tells municipalities what information they ought to file in how they prepare their tax bills. How insulting can you be to another level of government? It just so happens that today AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, issued a news release. It came hot off the press about 25 minutes ago. What does it say?

"Property Taxpayers Hit Again." It's dated today. "Municipal governments have been hit with several provincial announcements over the last week ... the implementation of the \$50-million rent supplement for low-income and special-needs housing tenants will help with the overwhelming affordable housing crisis," but municipalities have to pay for it. "On the other hand," they say, "the province is"—listen to this, Speaker; you'd be interested in this—"keeping \$28 million of a \$58-million ... allowance from the federal government."

It isn't Liberal research saying this; it is AMO saying this, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. You are keeping money that you should have passed through from the federal government to the local municipalities to deal with these programs. You're keeping \$30 million of that. Why aren't you passing it through?

Michael Power, the president of the association, states that, "The province continues to move forward and implement policies without meaningful partner input and without acknowledging the municipal capacity or the program effectiveness of some reforms."

Get it? You're not talking to the municipalities. You're downloading it on them. You have no idea how these programs are going to be implemented or how municipalities are going to be affected by it. Why don't you talk to your partners? Remember how when the AMO conference takes place you always talk about them in terms of partners? Well, talk to your partners. They're saying you're not talking to them; you're just unilaterally downloading it on them.

He goes on to say: "The announcements imply that the municipal property tax base is able to bear this additional financial downloading and this clearly is not the case ... I call on the province"—this is the president of AMO, the organization that represents pretty much every municipality in Ontario—"to discuss the capacity of municipalities to handle this and any other surprises that the province may be contemplating."

Why aren't you doing this? Why do you have this higher-than-thou attitude? You just download it, implement it, you don't talk to the experts, you don't talk to the implementers; you just go ahead and do it and create chaos and havoc.

One of the other interesting things that is not in the budget bill that should be there deals with the doctor shortage situation in this province. I wrote to the minister about that on July 3 of this year, and I finally got a response. I want to read some of the response to you. This is a letter that has been five months in coming. This is from the Minister of Health, dated November 3.

"Dear Mr Gerretsen:

"Thank you for your letter about the distribution of physicians in the Kingston area." I didn't talk about distribution; I talked about the shortage of physicians. It says, "With regard to your constituents that are unable to find a family physician, they may wish to contact the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario." Have you ever called them? Their lines are plugged with people looking for physicians. It then says, "The college requires a postal code and the name of the hospital closest to your constituent's home."

She goes on to say, "I also want to ensure that the province has an adequate supply of physicians and the right mix of specialists." I would dare say, tell that to the people out there who have been looking for the last two, three, four years for a family physician.

Tell that to the people in Lansdowne. The member for Leeds and Grenville may want to listen to this, because Lansdowne is in his riding. They have a health centre. The doctor who has worked there is not going to come back from maternity leave. You know what an editorial in the Kingston Whig-Standard just recently said, on November 16? "About 1,200 patients will now be forced to travel to walk-in clinics in Kingston and Brockville if they need routine medical attention."

Do you know what that means? From Lansdowne to Kingston is probably a good 50 kilometres, and probably about 40 kilometres to Brockville. The minister has the nerve to say there's not a shortage of physicians? This is only one example of the many hundreds that are out

there. Our Academy of Medicine and physicians in the Kingston area get anywhere from 50 to 70 calls per day from people looking for family physicians. Yes, I'll grant you, some of these may be duplicates. People will phone one doctor, they'll phone the academy, they'll phone the College of Physicians and Surgeons. They're desperate. They need a family doctor.

We live in a land of plenty. We live in a country that has been regarded as the number one place to live in the world, from a quality-of-life viewpoint. Yet we cannot make certain that a family physician is available for people who live in the largest province of this country. That is a shame.

Yes, you are starting to take the right step, as suggested by Dalton McGuinty during the election, that one way to get people into underserved areas is maybe to adopt a program much like they have at the Royal Military College for military personnel. The government pays the tuition fees of these individuals, the medical students, and in return for that they agree to go to an underserved area for five years. It's the same way the military has been operating the cadet program at RMC for the last 30 or 40 or 50 years.

But that doesn't solve the problem right now. That solution is probably five, six, seven, eight years away, when some of these people start graduating. Why don't you get together with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, with the Ontario Medical Association, with the Ministry of Health, and try to do something about the number of foreign-trained doctors who are in this province right now and have our qualifications to practise medicine in this province and make sure that their process of getting approved to practise medicine in this province can be speeded up?

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I heard of one case just recently where a foreign-trained doctor has passed the Canadian Medical Association exam, but he still can't do anything in the medical field. You know why? Because he has to wait 11 months before he is allowed to write the Ontario provincial exam. Here we have a trained individual—and I think we ought to make sure that these individuals practise their medicine up to the standards that we find acceptable in Ontario, that follow all the rules and regulations. It should be nothing less than that. But why are we allowing this kind of situation to fester for 11 months when you can do something by getting this person qualified earlier to alleviate some of the physician shortages?

Those are just practical solutions as to how you can solve the problem. I know there are probably all sorts of interest groups that may prevent it, one way or the other, from happening. But I think it's up to the government, if it is truly concerned about the health care that our people have in this province, to cut through a lot of these turf protection areas. I'm a lawyer by profession. I know we have many areas of turf protection there as well; no question about it. It's only the government that can say, "We're going to cut through this, and we're going to make it happen for the people of Ontario." These are

some of the issues that should have been dealt with in the budget documents.

I'm sure that the people of Ontario must think that most of the discussions in this place sort of deal with a continuing election campaign. I say to the people very clearly that the election is over. You won. Now govern for all the people of Ontario. Don't just govern for those individuals you think supported you.

I'm convinced, as are many, many people in this province, that you basically don't care about the bottom third on the economic scale of this province. The longer I'm around this place and the more decisions I hear that are being made on an ongoing basis, the more convinced I am of that. That is totally different from anything else that's ever happened in this province before. Any other government, once the election was over, governed for all the people of Ontario. I would strongly suggest you return to that model.

We live in a great country, in a great province. You have done more in the last five years to divide that ever-expanding difference between the haves and the have-nots in this country and in this province than anybody else, any other government prior to that. You still have three and a half years left. Try to govern truly for the best welfare of all of the people of Ontario, including those unfortunate people who for whatever reason need the help of this government.

Mr Christopherson: I want to compliment the member from Kingston and the Islands on his remarks. I think he's touched on an awful lot of concerns that a growing number of people share.

Picking up on his last comments about the growing gap, I want to say to the government members and the member from Kingston and the Islands that you're right. This is an issue. The trend has been seen. It's now being recorded and documented. There are people of sterling reputation, qualified professionals, who are crunching the numbers, and clearly we are seeing that there's a growing gap. You can take that not only from individuals here in Ontario, but you could even apply that, quite frankly, to the world and to developing nations, those who haven't been fortunate enough to be part of the original G7 and then—what?—G8, and then G8 and a half.

It's a trend that cannot continue in an unlimited fashion, because at some point that whole concept breaks apart. You cannot continue. We can't afford globally, not just in Ontario but globally, to see so much wealth accumulated in fewer and fewer hands, and then, to take the macro and go to the micro, within Canada and within Ontario. That very accumulation of wealth within our nation and our province is now concentrating in fewer and fewer hands while the have-nots are growing in number. The people in the middle are not gradually becoming haves. What they are doing is slowly sliding into the have-nots, and virtually every measure this government has taken exacerbates the growing gap.

Mr Skarica: I want to congratulate the member from Kingston and the Islands as well, and I suspect one of the reasons he doesn't use the Liberal research but the Con-

servative figures is because they're accurate. But I don't think you should go and dwell on the debt figures, because if you go and look at the history, it does not reflect well on the Liberal Party.

Before the Liberal Party took over as the government from 1985 to 1990, the total debt in this province was \$30 billion. That was over 120 years, more or less, at the rate of \$250 million per year. What happened when the Liberals took over? All of a sudden the debt accumulation accelerated and \$10 billion was added to the debt over a mere five-year period, an increase of 33%. Then when the NDP took over in 1990, they increased the debt by a further \$47 billion and basically doubled it. When we took over, there was a \$12-billion deficit. We increased the debt by some \$20 billion. About half of that was in the first year, and the reason for that was that we had this huge deficit to begin with and, to use the member for Hamilton West's term, we had to massage it down.

You'll recall, member for Kingston and the Islands, you opposed each and every one of our attempts to reduce that debt. When we tried to reduce welfare spending, you opposed that. Every time we tried to cut government spending, it was opposed by the Liberals.

But at least your figures are relatively accurate, as opposed to some of the information from some of your fellow Liberal members. You'll recall the member from Windsor-Essex said that the Liberals increased the debt by \$5 billion. He was off by \$5 billion. He said the NDP increased the debt by \$12 billion. He was off by \$35 billion—he was off by \$40 billion.

To conclude, I congratulate him that he's using the right numbers when he's using—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Thank you. The member for Thunder Bay-Superior North.

Mr Gravelle: I certainly want to compliment the member for Kingston and the Islands for his usual very strong speech. I'm always impressed when I listen to him. He makes a great deal of sense. There are so many areas I want to talk about where I do agree with him, but I'll focus on a couple.

One, I agree with the recommendation that he made, and I hope the government members were listening, in terms of the land transfer tax rebate going to the first-time buyers of new homes being extended to existing homes. That makes a great deal of sense I believe. There's no question that a lot of people have asked me about it in my constituency, and I support that.

I want to focus on your comments related to physician shortages, and in particular the fact that there are a number of foreign-trained physicians who are very keen to practise in this province and this government is really doing nothing at all to help deal with that reality and try to get them to practise in this province. The fact is they continue to believe that it is simply a distribution problem, not a supply problem as well. Certainly in my riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North, there are a number of foreign-trained physicians, very keen psychiatrists, gen-

eral practitioners, specialists, who are very keen to come forward. I think the government has to recognize that.

The Minister of Health appointed a fact-finding commissioner, Dr Robert McKendry, back in August, and we were looking very much forward to getting the results of his findings as quickly as possible. We're now heading right into December and we haven't heard that report yet. We want to get that. It is very important that action be taken immediately, because no matter what happens, we need solutions right now for those people who need doctors.

One other aspect that I think should be dealt with is the fact that nurse practitioners need to be supported in a much more strong way than they are by this government. We had to drag this government kicking and screaming to get the nurse practitioner legislation brought forward; we finally did. They then were very slow to announce funding for it. They then wouldn't release the funding. The fact is that nurse practitioners can provide an extremely important role, especially in northern and rural communities, and we're huge supporters of them here on the Liberal caucus side.

I'm glad to compliment the member from Kingston and the Islands once again for a great speech.

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Hon Mr Sampson: I always listen intently when the member for Kingston and the Islands stands up and speaks in this House. When he speaks about taxes and the implication of taxes across the board, of course, he speaks with great expertise. He was the mayor of the city of Kingston for a period of time, and the taxes went up, I think, 30%—I know the member will correct me—when he was mayor. He also spoke about the Celanese plant. If I remember the Kingston area, John, that would be the old DuPont plant, isn't it?

Mr Gerretsen: No.

Hon Mr Sampson: That's right, it's the other plant. If he was reading the press release, I think he was talking about the owner selling that asset or looking to sell that asset. I would say to him that what we as a government have tried to do is make it attractive for foreign investors to invest in this province by lowering the tax base and allowing foreign capital to come in, understanding that when foreign capital is employed properly, it will create jobs. That's been the prime objective.

The member went on quite eloquently for some time about the debt in this province and he said, I think quite proudly, that under the Liberal regime in this province the debt did not go up substantially. What he didn't tell you, of course, was that in order to make sure they didn't borrow—in fact they borrowed marginally during that time—they funded their expenditures by raising the tax base of this province a number of times; 33 times, as the member for Brockville draws my attention.

I say to my colleague from Kingston that you can't tell half a story. If you're going to proudly stand in this House and say that when you and your government were in power you didn't raise the debt in the province, you should also say you did that by raising taxes.

Mr Gerretsen: I thank the members from Hamilton West, Wentworth-Burlington, Thunder Bay-Superior North and Mississauga Centre. First of all, to the member from Wentworth, you didn't raise \$30 billion worth of debt in 120 years; it was all done in about 15 years prior to 1985. In about 1970 this province had no debt at all.

Number two, if the taxes of the city of Kingston did go up 30% over an eight-year period, that's about 3.5% per year. Inflation went up three or four times that amount. If what you're saying is correct, I'm very proud of my record.

You like to talk about our 33 tax increases. You have increased taxes 456 times through user fees. You have increased taxes in this province 456 times just in the last five years.

As far as the doctor shortage is concerned, I didn't get a chance to read that paragraph in the minister's letter to me. We all think that when Dr Robert McKendry, the fact-finding commissioner, comes out with a report something will be done. Do you know what the minister says about doctor shortages in her letter? "Based on the outcome of the commissioner's report, an expert panel will be appointed to undertake longer term planning with the objective of developing strategies to match future service levels with the required physician human resources."

It is time for the studies to end. There are places across this province, large and small, rural and urban, where people cannot get a family physician. In a country and a province as strong as ours, surely that is the least that people can expect from their health care system. Do something about it. Get everybody around the table and fix the problem.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I want to begin by saying that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford this evening.

This evening we are debating Bill 14, the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act, 1999. I want to say that I'm proud to take part in this debate because today is indeed a very historic day in our province. Today, third reading was given to Bill 7, the Balanced Budget Act, 1999.

Interjections.

Mr Newman: You hear boos over there. Bill 7 now protects taxpayers in our province. No new tax can be levied in this province unless it's been put before the people of Ontario via referendum or in a general election. Also, there can be no increases in current taxes. Bill 7 also penalizes cabinet ministers 25% of their cabinet stipend for the first deficit and 50% for any subsequent deficit brought forward after that.

This is truly an historic day in the province. The taxpayers of Ontario now have protection against tax increases. That's why it's so fitting that tonight we are talking about Bill 14. We should know that since 1995, when our party was elected by the people of Ontario, we have introduced 99 different tax cuts in our province.

There have been cuts to personal income taxes totalling 30% in reduction of the rate. We've also seen the

employer health tax removed from the first \$400,000 of a company's payroll. We've seen the health tax entirely removed for self-employed Ontarians. We've also seen, as the member for Durham mentioned tonight, the Ontario child care tax credit introduced, and with this bill we're seeing that credit actually increase from \$1,020 to \$1,100 per year per child under the age of seven, effective July 1, 1999. These are all important tax cuts, which have contributed to some 640,000 net new jobs in Ontario.

Mr Speaker, you've been in this place for some time now. Think back to budgets of previous governments. There were lineups at the gas pumps because they knew that governments were going to hike gas taxes. There were lineups at LCBO stores because they knew governments were going to hike taxes on liquor. We also saw lineups at Brewers Retail outlets where, again, people knew that governments were going to hike taxes. We also saw long lineups at convenience stores, where people were buying cigarettes.

They had confidence that those governments were going to hike taxes. That's far different from what they see with our government. What they've seen with our government is 99 tax cuts. They haven't seen any taxes introduced by our government on gasoline or on the other items I brought forth. They have confidence that this government will not hike taxes. That's a strong message to the people of Ontario.

It would be great in Ontario if the federal government would do the same. I encourage all the Liberal members present tonight, and those who aren't, when they go to Ottawa next weekend, because they're going to be there propping up their leader—

Mr Tascona: It's this weekend.

Mr Newman:—this weekend, yes, propping up Dalton McGuinty, maybe they can talk to their federal cousins—there are 101 of them from Ontario—and ask them to stand up for Ontarians, ask them to stand up for tax cuts, to reduce the EI premiums our employers and individuals have to pay in our province. I hope that when all those members are in Ottawa, either voting for a leadership review or not, they will ask their federal cousins to bring forward tax cuts on behalf of the people of Canada.

In the last year, we've seen the economy of Ontario expand by 4.2%, double the rate of the rest of Canada. While the opposition claims that it's all happening because of the United States, they're simply wrong. What we're doing in Ontario is cutting taxes and creating jobs. In the second quarter of this year, Ontario's GDP grew by 1.2%. That's an annualized rate of 5%. Ontario now accounts for 41% of Canada's GDP. Business investment has also risen significantly, to \$38.5 billion.

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Where has this investment gone? I have a few examples here. It's right across the province. It's in all ridings in Ontario. For example, IBM recently announced that it will build its new \$125-million software development lab in Markham. Lucent Technologies recently announced a

\$50-million investment in their Ontario headquarters. In 1997, Toyota decided to spend some \$600 million on a plant expansion in Cambridge. In 1998, Honda invested \$300 million in Alliston. General Motors, not be outdone, announced that it will locate a major research and development facility in Oshawa, bringing 100 research engineering jobs here. Those are significant investments in the province of Ontario.

Mr Skarica: Are those part-time jobs?

Mr Newman: No, those are absolutely full-time jobs, jobs that pay well, jobs that will definitely contribute to the economy in Ontario.

You have to ask yourself, why was this not happening before? Again, it's the confidence factor. Companies and investors didn't have confidence in the economy of the province of Ontario before 1995. They have confidence today and we have seen those jobs created.

From 1985 to 1995 we saw in our province 65 tax hikes. It's a little bit of a game between the Liberals and the NDP. The Liberals hiked taxes 33 times; the NDP hiked taxes 32 times. We have cut taxes through 99 tax cuts being introduced here in our province. Under the Liberal regime from 1985 to 1990, we saw welfare rates increase, more people go on welfare at a time when the economy was booming. We all saw what happened there.

This bill, the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act, is a major step in the right direction of the finances of this province. It provides a legislative framework for many of the tax cuts that were announced in the 1999 budget, most especially a 20% reduction in the income tax rate in our province.

This bill brings the personal income tax rate in our province in 1999 from 40.5% of the basic federal rate to 39.5% of the basic federal rate. That's from 40.5% to 39.5%. What the bill also does is reduce that rate again. Effective, I believe it is January 2000, it reduces it from 39.5% to 38.5%.

If you think back to 1995, the personal income tax rate in this province was 58% of the basic federal rate. We were one of the most highly taxed jurisdictions in all of North America.

Between 1990 and 1995, when the NDP brought in their 32 tax hikes, we saw a net job loss in this province of 10,000 jobs. There were 10,000 jobs lost in this province. What has our government done in four and a half years? We have 640,000 net new jobs in this province, the majority of these jobs being full-time jobs paying good wages.

The bill before us today also extends the land transfer tax refund for first-time buyers of newly constructed homes. It increases the maximum from \$1,725 to \$2,000. It also makes permanent the retail sales tax rebate on building materials for farmers. It also enhances the capital tax exemption for small businesses. Importantly, this bill also increases the employer health tax exemption from \$400,000 to \$600,000 and that's good for all small businesses across Ontario, in fact all businesses in Ontario, because that was simply a tax on jobs. That's what the employer health tax was. It was brought forward

by the Liberals under David Peterson and it was basically a job-killing tax. I guess it's no different from what the federal government is doing today with EI premiums in our province. I hope when they go to Ottawa this weekend that they bring that message to their 101 cousins who will be there at the leadership review.

On this note, I will pass it on to the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Mr Tascona: I am certainly pleased to join in the debate with the MPP from Scarborough Southwest. The act entitled the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act, 1999, is certainly another one of our promises kept.

I want to refer to the Blueprint that we ran on and I was elected on. It says, in terms of cutting taxes: "From 1995 to 1998, we cut taxes 69 times, including a 30% cut in income tax rates. This was the biggest tax cut in Ontario history and the first real increase in take-home pay for the average Ontario worker in more than a decade!"

Of course, that led to tremendous economic growth. "A record 540,000 new jobs were created in Ontario in under four years." That's one of our promises that was kept.

What we're seeing now is a pledge for 30 additional tax cuts. That will bring it to 99 tax cuts, and one could say that the great tax cuts are here. Certainly, we have delivered on our promise, unlike the Liberals.

I want to quote from the Toronto Star here today:

"Taxes Said Hitting Tenants.

"Federal levies cost tenants hundreds extra a year, landlord study says."

I'll quote from the front page of the Toronto Star, the business section:

"Tenants in apartment buildings pay hundreds of dollars more than necessary each year because of federal taxes, says a study by the Canadian Federation of Apartment Associations.

"The lobby released a study yesterday showing that inequities in the federal tax system, including the GST and capital gains tax, are penalizing landlords who have to pass the extra costs to tenants."

That's just an example of the federal government turning a deaf ear to the taxpayers of this country and certainly of this province. What we're trying to do here is—tax cuts create jobs and they create growth and they create prosperity.

I also want refer to the Toronto Star, August 28, 1999, and I quote:

"'We all want to reduce the gap between the poor and the rich. And we all want to eliminate child poverty. But to reach those objectives, our party must respond to economic changes with change.' ... McDonough advocates tax relief for low and middle-income Canadians, starting with the gradual elimination of the GST." She said the GST hits working people hardest because they pay the same rate of tax as the rich.

"Although at least a third of the delegates opposed,"—this in their convention—"McDonough's position managed to pass" and become NDP federal party policy.

Certainly, the GST has been one of the great promises never kept by the federal Liberals.

We also have Ken Georgetti, former president of the BC Federation of Labour and current president of the Canadian Labour Congress, August 25 of this year: "CLC calls for social investments, progressive tax reform and low- and middle-income tax relief."

"Federal tax revenues under the Liberals have risen from 14.8% of Canada's economy (GDP) to a projected 16.2% next year, mainly because income tax thresholds and tax credits have not risen in line with prices." That's what we know as tax bracket creep.

"The balanced approach the CLC advocates matches badly needed reinvestments in social programs and job creation with progressive tax reform ... and tax relief closely targeted to low- and middle-income earners.

"The best way to begin tax reform would be to significantly raise the threshold at which workers start to pay tax."

That's something the federal government has been urged to do, and in fact they've refused to do that.

So what we have to do as a province—from what I understand, in 1998, Ontario accounted for 41% of the GDP of this country. That is a staggering figure in terms of the growth that has occurred under the Progressive Conservative government in this province since 1995.

There are other aspects of this bill, with respect to the employer health tax, for example. The definition of "eligible employer" in the Employer Health Tax Act is being amended to reflect changes made in the exemptions given under subsection 149(1) of the Income Tax Act. Also, what's important to employers is that section 3 of the Employer Health Tax Act is being amended to provide that employers whose annual total remuneration is \$600,000 or less do not pay the taxes in installments.

Another area that is very important is the Income Tax Act. Under the Income Tax Act, the personal income tax rate is reduced from 40.5% to 39.5% of the basic federal tax for 1999 and to 38.5% of basic federal tax for the year 2000 and subsequent years. Certainly that is the lowest rate in this country. "The fair share health care levy is adjusted to reflect the change in income tax rates."

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We also have: "The maximum annual benefit under the Ontario child care supplement for working families is increased from \$1,020 to \$1,100 effective July 1" of this year "for each eligible child under seven years of age. The rates at which the benefits accrue to lower-income working families are increased." That's welcome news to taxpayers, but also families with children.

The final area on which I want to comment, in terms of this bill, is the Land Transfer Tax Act. "The act now permits the refund of land transfer taxes payable on the purchase on or before March 31, 1999, of a newly constructed home by a first-time buyer. Amendments extend this deadline to March 31, 2000, and increase the maxi-

mum amount of the refund to \$2,000 for agreements of purchase and sale entered into after March 31, 1999, and before April 1, 2000."

Certainly in an area such as mine, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, one of the fastest-growing areas in the province—in fact it is the largest riding of electors in this province—we're seeing unprecedented growth in the construction industry. We are seeing an area from Barrie down to Bradford that is growing by leaps and bounds, tremendous investment in the education sector with new schools being constructed, tremendous investment in this area with respect to health care. Along Highway 400 we're seeing tremendous growth.

As you can see, the homes are being constructed all the way up from Toronto and right along the boundaries of Highway 400. That is good news for Ontario and for the construction workers of this province. This type of growth is unprecedented. Certainly it's a result of our policies. The land transfer tax amendment is something that is going to spur first-time owners to buy.

What we find in the city of Barrie, in the town of Innisfil and in the township of Bradford West Gwillimbury is tremendous opportunities for first-time homebuyers to come up and live in this area, because it is a tremendous area with respect to all the services that are provided, a friendly area to raise your family and also to retire. The opportunities that are being created by tremendous expansion in retirement home construction and in new single-family dwellings are a compliment to this government because of the growth we are seeing in this area.

I don't think it's any small coincidence that you're seeing that the growth and the prosperity is a direct result of people having more disposable income in their pockets, having confidence that they're going to have a job that looks secure. They can plan into the future in terms of what their needs are. We're seeing tremendous growth with respect to furniture stores, tremendous purchases of furniture by people who are buying their new homes. It just permeates throughout the economy in terms of that construction growth, the jobs and also the offshoot of that in terms of purchases that are being made.

As I say, we're continuing that growth: 66 tax cuts during our mandate before we were re-elected in 1999, and another 30 tax cuts can only go to benefit consumers because that money stays in their pockets. They can use it. Everybody knows there's only one taxpayer and that money is being put back into the economy. That's where it's going. We're seeing that people are saving less and spending more on things they need. Obviously that spurs the economy.

I'm very pleased to support this bill. The members from Scarborough Southwest, Durham, Hamilton-Wentworth and Ancaster have set out their positions on it. I'm very pleased to support this bill.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): We certainly had a fixation over the last four years or four and a half years on the word "taxes," but I think we need to remember that taxes generate the budget for the prov-

ince. In the budget, really, are the provincial services expressed in numbers. I don't enjoy paying taxes. In my previous life I never enjoyed raising taxes. But when I go in to buy a car, I expect to pay for it. When I use the hospital or when my children use the schools, I expect to pay for it.

We've lost touch with the previous sense of government providing service. It's great to have the extra \$10 a week in pay. That buys about a chocolate bar a day, and unfortunately I do that far too often. I take that \$10 because I have no choice, but I can't take the \$10 and go to the hospital and say, "I'd like to give you the \$10 and have this wing reopened and have the nurses hired back." I can get together with other people in my community and I still can't reopen that hospital floor; I can't do something for my school to keep it open.

There is a responsibility of government to make those collective decisions, to say, "As individuals, it can't happen, but we and we alone have the responsibility to say that that hospital must have nurses; that school in that community must stay open." We haven't seen that vision over the last four years. It's been a "What's in it for me?" series of actions rather than, "We have a responsibility to do what's best for that community"—certainly to be efficient, certainly to keep costs down, but not just to look at the dollar but also to look at the impact on that community and on every single person in this province. We need to get back to the collective vision of where we are going in Ontario, what our citizens need and how we go about providing that service.

Mr Christopherson: I want to comment on the remarks of the member for Scarborough Southwest, who was the first speaker.

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: I'm just soaking it up. I don't often get applause from that side of the House.

I just wanted to comment that in the early part of his remarks all he wanted to talk about—and this may generate another round of applause; who knows?—was tax cuts, tax cuts, tax cuts. Does that do it for you?

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: I thought it might. Go ahead, enjoy your moment.

The other side of the coin, the other side of that, the part that the member for Scarborough Southwest and all the other members of the government don't want to talk about, is how that is playing out in our communities, with real people on the ground. By that, I mean inclusively real people, not the exclusive version you used in your throne speech.

The number of user fees that have gone up—these things may only be a few bucks here and there to some people, but it does add up, and not everybody has that kind of money.

He talked about the referendum and how important and crucial that was. Where was the referendum that the people of Ontario were entitled to when you decided you were going to slash the health care system in Ontario, or the education system? Don't look at me with your face

all screwed up like you don't know what I'm talking about. If you come into Hamilton, I can show you what you've done to the education system. I can show you what your flawed funding formula means to kids with special needs, kids who in the first few weeks of school couldn't even be in the classroom because there wasn't enough money to hire the educational assistants.

These things are all the other side of your tax cuts. It may sound good to your rich friends when they do their income tax, but the reality is it's affecting the quality of life of more and more people. That's that growing gap I'm talking to you about.

Mr O'Toole: It's a truly historic day, given the fact that earlier today we passed Bill 7, the Taxpayer Protection Act, as well as debating Bill 14 tonight, more tax cuts. So it really is historic, and I think it's important.

It's even more of a juxtaposition, if I may, to have the member for Scarborough Southwest and the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford—who are both members of the task force that is doing an intensive review of gas prices, and I am a member of that committee. We're all for doing the best for the consumer. I'm somewhat disappointed that the member for Halton isn't here tonight, but I know he's out there. He's probably checking gas prices.

In concluding, I must say that the member from Hamilton-Wentworth, who is the parliamentary assistant to the minister, is here tonight. He has been vigilantly watching the debate and fine-tuning every word that has been said. Just recently he conducted some consultations on vacant and seasonal properties, I believe. It's clear from what I've heard from my constituents that he was listening, and it's clear from this legislation that he's made an impact with the minister.

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But even today, as I was listening to the news and watching the papers—really, price and protecting consumers is all part of the taxpayer thing that we're talking about. In that respect, in reviewing other provinces and their challenge as well, I look at St John's, Newfoundland, and they are expecting a price of over 70 cents. Quebec is close to that. Nova Scotia is close to that.

So I call on John Manley and the federal Liberal tax-and-spend government to look at this. They've got to look at the Competition Act, what we need to protect the consumer, protect the taxpayer. That's what we're all about.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I'm pleased to comment on this debate today and to say to the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford how very impressed I am with the development that's going on in your area. But you speak of a world that I do not know, for the area that I represent is very different, and I would ask you to experience my part of the world, northern Ontario. I would like to invite you up this intercession that we're going to be embarking on soon, to maybe come to see how other parts of the province are trying to struggle with what this government is doing.

The member for Prince Edward-Hastings said it very well, that it's very nice to have that extra \$5 or \$10 in one's wallet every week, but how much cancer treatment is that going to buy for somebody? If we had all the cancer treatment, then I'd say yes, we could start looking at tax cuts. But if we're not doing a proper job of government—and I don't think we are, as the auditor has pointed out that not 30% of the people are receiving cancer treatments on a timely basis—then I think we are failing the people of Ontario. That is basically a question of funding, and I think we have to fund those programs that we in government feel are important. I think health care is.

You certainly are starting to get out of the business of other things, and it's certainly your right to look at that. Maybe with some of that I won't argue with you, but when it comes to fundamental services that are really the basic equalizer in our society, giving people an equal opportunity—not that everybody is going to end up in the same place, but at least everybody should have that equal shot to start the run up the rungs of the ladder. Health care and education have to be primary investments, not expenditures but investments that a government makes in its people. I believe you failed to do that and you continue to fail to do that, as we've seen from the recent budget cuts that have been illuminated in the leak last week in the newspaper.

I think these things have to be fixed, and once these things are fixed—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. In response, the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr Newman: I'm pleased to respond on behalf of myself and the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford this evening to the four members who were responding to our comments.

First, to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, I know you said you didn't like paying taxes and you didn't mind paying for education and health care. I don't know if this is a new policy that the Liberals have tonight. I'm not sure.

The member for Hamilton West was listening to my comments. I did mention the words "tax cuts"; I'm not sure how many times.

Mr Christopherson: Too many.

Mr Newman: Well, I think I mentioned "tax cuts" 99 times, because that's how many times we've cut taxes. He mentioned that it's a few bucks here, a few bucks there. That's the very point that brought us all those 65 tax hikes from 1985 to 1995. So that the people of Ontario wouldn't mind, it was only three dollars here, five dollars there, a few dollars there. That's what brought those 65 tax hikes to our province and took jobs out of our province.

He talks about health care. Well, let's talk about health care. I'm proud to defend our record on health care. When we took office, this province was spending \$17.4 billion on health care. The Liberals wanted to only spend \$17 billion. When we came in the NDP were spending \$17.4 billion. Today we're spending over

\$20.6 billion on health care, plus we made a promise in our Blueprint to increase health care spending by 20% over four years. We were actually able to increase that health care spending over the last four years while at the same time the federal Liberal government cut transfers to our province and cut the health care of the people of Ontario.

I say to the member for Hamilton West, he should always remember that it's a strong economy that's going to continue to pay for health care and it's a strong economy that's going to continue to pay for our education system, and a strong economy comes through tax cuts and job creation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sergio: I take the opportunity to address a few remarks on the bill that is in front of us, which actually is nothing more than the 1999 budget which the government wants to implement.

Actually, there is a bit more to it than just simply implementing the 1999 Conservative budget. It does incorporate a number of other amendments, which in themselves would make the bill a lot more than simply saying that it's the provincial budget. I think it's a mini-omnibus bill, because it does give power to the government, to the Premier's office, to the various ministers, to do the things they want to do their own way. Of course, we do not have the details of what they want to do.

Let me address just a couple of areas of the budget, especially what's missing in it. It's not what's in it; it is really what's missing from the 1999 budget. If we had more time, I would dwell on the various mentions which Mr Erik Peters well expressed publicly about the financial conduct of the government. But I would limit myself in the few minutes that I have and mention just a couple of things.

Interjections.

Mr Sergio: Of course, my friends say, "Speak to the bill," and indeed it's the item that I want to dwell on, because there's nothing which addresses the real needs of the people.

Who are the people we should be concerned with? Should it be the seniors? Should it be the 200,000 children who are being affected by this particular government because of their disastrous way of collecting \$1.2 billion on behalf of the Family Responsibility Office? They don't seem to care that not only are there single mothers but there are 200,000 kids suffering because of the inefficiencies of this government.

We heard about the health care system. The Provincial Auditor went to great lengths in saying that the most disastrous record of this government is within the health care restructuring system. It will take another four years to accomplish what they set out to do with restructuring the health care system. The money which they had set out that they would be saving and then would channel and funnel into other areas is not happening. It's not there. As a matter of fact, in one brand new, \$110-million hospital, half of the operating rooms are not operating because of lack of funds. This is not us; this is somebody else who

controls the way you do your own financial affairs, who says it's completely out of control.

Can you imagine that we have to send mothers with cancer to Buffalo, Thunder Bay, because we cannot take care of those people here? We have so much waste in the government solely to accomplish one very silly, very bad mistake, one very bad promise that they made: a 30% tax rebate. I wonder, if they had gone to the public in the form of a referendum, which they said they were going to do five years ago, if the public would have said: "We want a health care system instead of tax cuts. We want a health care system that is here, made in Ontario for Canadian people, not an imported, south-of-the-border system."

My colleague from Kingston and the Islands mentioned \$9.2 billion a year in interest payments on their debt, \$800 million more this year because of the money they borrowed. I would like to ask the Premier and the members on the government side how many affordable units we could provide with \$800 million, how many more beds we could provide for long-term care, how many more children we could feed with an extra \$800 million.

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But you know, they don't seem to care. They say: "You know what? We're going to promise another 20% or 30% tax rebate and we're going to borrow more money and, yes, we're going to pay more interest." Isn't that common sense? I think it's terrible common sense.

It's unfortunate that we have to deal with a government that keeps on saying: "Do you know what? There is more coming. We are going to do more." We are saying, "From which planet are you coming?" The people are saying, "Look, we can't take any more of this."

Just the other day, they'd been caught with their pants down, if you will—let's call it the way it is—that \$800 million.

Interjections.

Mr Sergio: They are saying, "Where are you getting that, the Toronto Star?" When it's something that they like, "Oh, yes, according to the Toronto Star." But \$800 million more cuts from the education system alone?

The minister was saying, "We have to do it because we have to balance the budget." Come on, guys. Come on, Mr Harris. Give us a break. The people don't care about your tax break for the rich. They want to go to the hospital and make sure that there is a bed, that there is a nurse.

A mother with a child who has learning disabilities, learning problems, wants to have the proper teacher to teach that child. She doesn't want to hear about more of the same, another tax cut for the rich. Can you imagine? From \$88 billion to \$104 billion and they don't care.

Now they are saying, "We're going to bring balanced budget legislation." Where were you for the last five years, Harris and company? You did all the dirty work and now you want to jump in and say, "We're going to bring in a balanced budget." You've been criticizing the federal government. With all due respect, the federal

government balanced their books. They've got billions to shell out. What are you people doing? Borrowing more money.

Interjections.

Mr Sergio: They don't like that. Can you believe that? Every financial consultant keeps on saying: "You've got to reduce the debt. You've got to balance the books." But do you know the problem this government is having now, why they will be doing more cuts? Yes, people out there, they will be doing more cuts because they've got to balance the budget, and the money that was supposed to come from the various savings is not there.

What government couldn't foresee that every year we are getting hundreds of thousands more children who go to school and we've got to provide for? There are hundreds of thousands more seniors whom we have to provide for. That costs money. They didn't foresee that, but we told them.

Now, because they've got to balance the budget—and they are going to be the last province in Canada to balance their books—they've got to cut somewhere else. Isn't that nice?

I would like to leave a couple of minutes for my colleagues to make some comments. I will terminate this. I don't profess to do justice to the entire bill, because it would take quite a while, but I would love to pass it along to my colleagues on both sides to at least make a couple of comments. I thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Gravelle: I want to compliment the member for York West for his strong and eloquent comments. I think it's rather sad when you look back and think what decisions have been made as a result of this determined desire to, no matter what, go for tax cuts, tax cuts which people generally speaking find attractive. But the fact is, you pay an extreme price for it at times.

The first decision that was made was to cut 21.6% from people on social assistance, the most vulnerable in our society, which caused an enormous burden for many of them.

Very close on the heels of that, they decided to cut \$800 million out of our hospital system, cutbacks which have had an enormous impact on our health care system from the moment that took place, and we are having some real difficulty recovering from it.

Today, what we're seeing right in front of us in terms of our education system are many, many problems, but one of the most perhaps tragic and sad is the cuts to special education. I know that certainly in my riding the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board is absolutely begging the government to talk to them, to deal with them, to recognize that there are people within the system, children within the system, and parents, who are counting on the support amounts to be there for their children. The government, the Ministry of Education, put them through an extraordinary process, and the Catholic board worked very hard with them, yet no further money is forthcoming. So, again, this determination to draw the line to reach their targets has meant that they are no

longer helping those who are in need, specifically in this case children with special educational needs. That, to me, is a real tragedy.

It's a certain price you pay. You make real decisions and they quite comfortably carry on and proudly do so, but people in our society, in our province, are being impacted in very negative ways. I think they should be very careful when they make these decisions, recognizing what impact it has on real people.

Mr Skarica: It's pretty clear, listening to this debate, that the Liberals on the other side are going to oppose the 30 tax cuts that are in this bill.

The people of Ontario should realize two things. One is that the 30 tax cuts that are in this bill were outlined in our campaign platform, and they voted for that. So they want this to happen. What should also be pointed out is that today was a historic day in that we passed the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act. The Liberals on the other side all voted for that act, knowing at the same time that there are 30 tax cuts coming in this budget and a whole lot more in the next couple of years.

If the worst of all worlds happened and there was a Liberal government in three or four years, they are now committed to not raising any of the taxes, not rolling back any of the tax cuts that we're going to implement. If they were going to be logical about it, if they voted for the taxpayer legislation knowing that the province voted for the 30 tax cuts that are in this bill here today, knowing that they're going to happen, then how could they in good conscience vote for the taxpayer legislation, knowing there can't be any further tax increases without a referendum?

There is a certain lack of integrity in this approach, to oppose these tax cuts but at the same time to back the taxpayer referendum. It goes back to the flip-flop that happened on the taxpayer referendum. Before the election they said they opposed that type of legislation, but they voted for it today. They said they've always supported it. The truth of the matter is they didn't support it last time.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I listened very carefully to the remarks made by my colleague from York West. He mentioned one important item, and that important item was that when the Toronto Star, on the front page, raised the issue of a document that was shown in cabinet of an \$800-million tax cut to education alone, I thought at that time that it was an impossibility—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: This place works much better when one member speaks at a time. The member for Davenport has the floor.

Mr Ruprecht: Here is the nerve, but you know what? You didn't just cut the nerve, you've cut the bone. The bone is cut when there are 10 schools being shut down by the city of Toronto this year. And you know what? The Toronto school board—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr Ruprecht:—while we speak tonight, has to make another decision, and that decision is to cut 10 more schools and close them. How would you like them bananas? How would you like to have your children in those schools and have those schools closed? Would you like that? Would you like to disrupt the education of your kids in the school? School after school after school, that's what you're cutting.

I know this is very sensitive because you've been caught with your pants down and it ain't a pretty sight. I stand here today and I say to you, stop cutting, because what you're doing is giving a break to the rich.

Mr O'Toole: It's been a pleasure, but it's also been rather confusing to listen to the Liberal message tonight, delivered by the members for York West and Davenport, I think it is, or Dovercourt, clearly talking about apples and oranges—or bananas. He's soft on the issue of tax cuts, there's no question of that, whether it's bananas or oranges. The most important thing is that if somebody reads the Toronto Star every day, they will know that's the depth of the Liberal research group.

If one wants to look at some kind of really critical commentary on Bill 14 and Bill 7, you have to listen to the member for Wentworth-Burlington. Clearly, this gentleman has stood here night after night and tried to help the consumers, the taxpayers, the viewers tonight to understand that tax cuts create jobs. The Liberals just don't get it and the NDP aren't here to listen.

The commitment here starts with our platform document. I said that earlier this evening. If you look at the real fundamentals here, it says that the rate of Ontario personal income tax for the entire 1999 year is reduced from 40.5% to 39.5%, and is further being reduced in the future to 38.5%, the lowest provincial tax in Canada. We're leading the pack.

What's been the result of that? We have cut taxes, but what have we done? We've raised revenue. The revenue has just gone through the roof. The clear thing here is, if you look at the balanced budget legislation and you also look at the commitment to more tax cuts in Bill 14, we're on the right track. The consumers of Ontario have confidence that we'll have the economy to have a good health care system and a good education system.

The Acting Speaker: The member for York West, in response.

Mr Sergio: Briefly, I'd like to thank all the members who have participated in the debate. Let me just add that the way we have chosen is not their way. They keep on with the tax cuts. We like to say, "Let's care about the people; let's give them the care that they need."

They have to sell, they have to privatize, they have to spend money to increase the value so they can balance the books. There is no better way, no more crystal clear way than the Provincial Auditor when they said, "You guys are mismanaging the provincial dollar here, not only what's coming in but also what's going out." For heaven's sake, it's the Provincial Auditor who says, "You are giving contracts here at will, contracts worth

\$500,000, to fix roads." Those roads are not being fixed. The local municipalities are fixing those roads.

Where's the responsibility of the government versus the taxpayers of Ontario? This is the importance of the government and governing well. We are saying, before you have tax cuts, make sure that indeed those savings are passed on to the people who really make the difference, the people of Ontario who need it the most; that is, the women with cancer so that they don't have to go to Buffalo. They should have it here. We have 200,000 kids

who should have care here. We have seniors who deserve attention right now.

They have a majority. This is the way they see it. The people will have to speak at the end. That is not our way. I thank you for the listening time. I want to thank you for the time which was granted to me tonight on this particular matter.

The Acting Speaker: It being on the full side of 9:30 of the clock, we stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

The House adjourned at 2135.

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Mercredi 24 novembre 1999



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Honourable Gary Carr**

**Président
L'honorable Gary Carr**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 novembre 1999

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LABOUR MOBILITY

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): In a few moments I will be introducing a private member's bill that will restrict Quebec workers from taking our natural resources jobs.

Last spring, the Ontario government passed Bill 17, Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act, which restricts Quebec workers from working in the construction industry. While it has been only moderately successful to date, Bill 17 got the attention of the Quebec government and gave support to the Ontario negotiating team working on the labour mobility problem with that province.

Much of the area that I represent along the Quebec border, north of North Bay to Cochrane, has lost hundreds of jobs to Quebec workers in the forestry and mining industries, while Ontario workers don't have access to Quebec jobs. It is all too common to see Quebec residents cutting our trees and hauling our logs to our sawmills and paper mills. Similarly, there are many Quebec residents who work in our mines in northeastern Ontario, most commuting on a daily basis, while Quebec mines just across the border won't hire Ontario miners.

Unlike the robust economy of southern Ontario, jobs in the north are few and far between. Our economy is still based on our resources and our workers need every one. When Quebec puts up a barrier to our workers, it is time that we do the same.

I believe in free labour mobility in this country and I introduce this bill today on behalf of Ontario workers who don't have the opportunity to work in the province of Quebec. Today I am asking the Minister of Labour to support the workers of northeastern Ontario also by supporting this bill.

DMITRI "MATTI" BARANOVSKI

Mr David Young (Willowdale): From time to time a tragedy occurs that changes the way we view our community and the way we view each other, a tragedy that causes an entire community to feel so insecure, so powerless that fear holds it hostage.

On Sunday, November 14, a terrible and horrific crime ended the life of a young boy and sent shock waves through the city of Toronto. Matti Baranovski was in the wrong place at the wrong time, a victim of senseless mob violence. When tragedies like this occur, trust is violated and neighbours become a little more distant. Like the heartbreaking tragedies involving the losses of Alison Parrott and Sharin' Morningstar Keenan, this devastating passing will always be in our collective consciousness.

Matti and his family moved to Canada during the spring last year, believing they had left behind the violence and conflict that plague so much of the world. They moved to Toronto so that Matti could grow up in a safer environment. Matti represented all that is right with our young people. He will never be forgotten. His spirit will triumph over his death. Words cannot begin to describe the pain and anguish that his family is experiencing.

I rise now to ask, through this Legislature, for an opportunity to convey to the family the deep sympathy we all feel not only for that family but for all the young and their families who are victims of senseless violence. I know that our prayers and thoughts are with them.

RENFREW COUNTY AGRICULTURAL OFFICE

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Agriculture is very important to the economy of eastern Ontario and certainly in my county in Renfrew. Communities in the Ottawa Valley and communities that I represent, like Cobden, Beachburg, Renfrew, Arnprior and Eganville, depend to a very real degree on the health of the surrounding agricultural economy. For many years, the Ontario government has played an important role by maintaining very good field services in communities like the Ottawa Valley.

For the last number of years, however, we are seeing, and my farmers are seeing, as they are seeing in much of the rest of rural Ontario, a clawback, a closing up and leaving town by the Ontario government. Last week we heard from the president of the treasury board, the Chair of Management Board, that an additional \$8.7 million is going to be taken out of the already constrained agriculture budget.

I see from the minister's statement that \$5.2 million worth of cuts in the direct ministry budget are in favour of "administrative improvement." Well, the word out in communities like Renfrew and Stormont-Dundas is, "Yet

more field services are going to be withdrawn; yet more ag offices are going to be closed."

I stand here today on behalf of the farmers in Renfrew county to tell this government that we want our Renfrew county ag office kept open, keeping the very good programs and services that that office has provided over many decades available to the farmers.

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WESTSIDE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I am pleased to rise today to congratulate Westside Secondary School in Orangeville on the occasion of its official opening, which will take place on November 25.

Construction of the new school began in April 1998 and was completed in June this year. Students in Orangeville were able to start the new school year in Westside Secondary School this past September. This year, there were 515 students enrolled in grades 9, 10 and 11.

Westside has some unique traits. For example, a team of teachers dedicated themselves to oversee the building process. They were directly involved in every aspect of the construction, from the purchasing of supplies to the organization of the actual building. This was done after work hours on a volunteer basis and is just one example of the dedication of these teachers. They all deserve to be commended.

This new school has also chosen to organize according to key systems, not departments, as is traditionally the case. It was decided that subject departments alone do not cover all of the issues facing a modern high school.

Westside has a system of broadly based committees for things like operations, developing school policy and codes of behaviour, community links and curriculum discussions. These committees include teachers, parents and students.

A school is more than a building. What really makes a school are the students, their parents, the staff and the community volunteers who will come into the building and bring it to life. Westside Secondary School is no exception. I am honoured to have the opportunity to be present at the official opening tomorrow night.

CELANESE CANADA PLANT

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I rise before the house to express my shock and sadness over the loss of 243 jobs at Celanese Canada, a polyester manufacturing plant in Millhaven, in my riding. Celanese has been through a number of changes over the past several years, including a reorganization in 1992 and the introduction of a new product line four years later, which was hoped would increase the stability of the plant.

This plant has recently been sold to US-based KoSa, a polyester manufacturer. In response to changing markets for polyester staples, the plant intends to shut down two thirds of its Millhaven operation and mothball these

facilities. While plant employees were aware that negotiations were ongoing, the union president would indicate to me that they were led to believe the sale of the plant might in fact lead to expansion and better employment opportunities. Thus, they too were shocked to hear yesterday's news.

It is imperative that the Minister of Economic Trade and Development and the Minister of Labour take the initiative and contact the new owner of this company to explore ways to get these 243 qualified people back to work. This plant with well-trained staff and an excellent manufacturing facility is going to sit idle otherwise.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): According to Stats Canada, there are fewer police officers on the streets of the cities and towns across Ontario than there were in 1995. We know what that means to people in their own communities about how secure they feel.

It's interesting to note that in 1994, under then Solicitor General David Christopherson under the NDP government, we had announced a 1,000 police initiative that meant that we were going to increase, over the next couple of years, the number of police officers in this province by at least 1,000 police officers. It's interesting to note that in 1995, the PC government of Mike Harris cancelled that initiative, only to bring it back in order to try to call it a Conservative initiative. But there's a bit of a difference.

The initiative that we put forward was going to ensure that police departments across the province were not going to use these 1,000 police officers just to replace retiring police officers. In fact, it was to make sure that we were going to have new cops on the streets, not just replacing the ones that are going.

Under this particular program, we're now finding that these 1,000 police officers that are being brought into the system are not to bring in new police officers above and beyond the numbers of 1995; it is not even dealing with what's happening when it comes to the retirement.

The government, on this one, can say all it wants but when it comes down to taking a look at it, they're not doing what this program was intended to do, which is to increase the number of cops that we have on the streets across the province.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Each and every day, the brave men and women of Ontario's firefighting departments take extreme risks in order to protect our lives, our homes and our communities. Today, on behalf of my constituents in Durham, I'd like to recognize two distinguished firefighters in the riding of Durham for their bravery in the line of duty.

At the November 10 ceremony for the Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery, our Lieutenant Governor pre-

sented two of my constituents with the prestigious medal of bravery. Acting Captain Brian Douglas Goldsworthy, a resident of Oshawa and a firefighter with the Toronto department, was honoured for his role in the Bell Telephone fire that hit downtown Toronto this past summer. Captain Goldsworthy took great risk upon himself as he assisted with the hazardous conditions. As well, the high voltage electricity involved in the Bell Canada incident, mixed with fire and water, created a dangerous combination.

Also, Firefighter Michael Stanfield from Blackstock, also a member of the Toronto Fire Department, was invested with the Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery for his role in battling a fire in the Beaches area of Toronto. Mr Stanfield rescued six people and carried them, single-handedly, down a ladder to safety.

It is through the bravery and professionalism of Ontario firefighters such as Michael Stanfield and Brian Goldsworthy that Ontario is kept safe.

I'd also like to mention a number of the firefighters of my community who have been recently recognized: Gord Weir, Bill Hesson, Grydon Brown, Tim Calhoun, a firefighter from Clarington, and Chief Richard Miller and District Chief David Ballingall in Scugog township.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I would like to make a statement about another health care cost being put on to property tax.

Sarnia-Lambton municipal leaders have communicated to me the high level of frustration and outrage because your policies are forcing the local hospital community to request of the county \$6 million to go towards hospital expansion, restructuring that you requested and approved.

Health care is a provincial mandate. The local level of property tax was designed to sustain the limited needs of local government. Now local government is being asked to fund the delivery of health care out of those same limited property tax dollars. There is only one taxpayer. I will quote from a letter I received from the county warden:

"The taxpayers we serve are the same ones you serve and they are not as naive as you may think they are. The county of Lambton and its constituent municipalities will not stand for this and we will do our utmost to inform these taxpayers of what is going on....

"On behalf of the taxpayers of Lambton county, I would ask that you reconsider your funding policies and redirect ... monies from your ... provincial resources to fund your health care system. I also believe that communication needs to be made with the hospital communities to advise them against the effort to recoup their financial needs from an already overburdened local taxpayer."

MEAFORD

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): Today I would like to talk about the virtues of one of the many fine communities in my riding of Bruce-Grey. Meaford is renowned for its apple-growing and boasts many excellent orchards. Each fall, Meaford celebrates that harvest with the Apple Harvest Craft Show.

But there is more to Meaford than just apples. It is home to the Meaford Opera House where each year live theatre is featured during a summer festival.

It is also home of Beautiful Joe, the treasured story of the ugly, ill-treated dog of legend whose 1894 story became a hit of six million copies in 14 languages.

And that's not all. There's the 2,000-foot sandy beach on Georgian Bay, the Meaford Museum which houses the Meaford and District Fire Department's 1938 Maple Leaf fire truck and much more.

Meaford is also the site of the Canadian Coast Guard search and rescue station, manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week, during the boating season. It is on the tradition of boating that the station's former ship, the Spume, which was slated for the scrapyard, is now a unique attraction for residents and tourists alike. This ship, after plying the waters of Georgian Bay since 1963, was rescued through the efforts of the community and has now been completely restored and sits on the shore of the Meaford harbour.

Farming, industry, tourism and especially community spirit—Meaford has a lot offer.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption:

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Harbourfront Trailer Park Ltd.

Bill Pr7, An Act respecting The Corporation of the Town of Pickering.

Bill Pr13, An Act respecting Pembridge Insurance Company.

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill Pr8, An Act to change the name of The Corporation of the Township of Burleigh-Anstruther-Chandos to The Corporation of the Township of North Kawartha.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT ACT (AIR TRAFFIC NOISE), 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉVALUATION FONCIÈRE (BRUIT PROVOQUÉ PAR LA CIRCULATION AÉRIENNE)

Mr DeFaria moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act requiring the consideration of air traffic noise in the assessment of residential property / Projet de loi 19, Loi exigeant la prise en compte du bruit provoqué par la circulation aérienne lors de l'évaluation de biens résidentiels.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): During the last session, I introduced hundreds of petitions from residents of my riding of Mississauga East complaining about air traffic noise and the impact it has in their homes. This bill is simply to address those concerns. It's a simple bill and it reads that for the purpose of determining the current value of land used for residential purposes, consideration shall be given to air traffic noise.

I hope I will have the support of this House when the bill is debated.

FOOD BANK ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DES BANQUES D'ALIMENTATION

Mr Spina moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to ensure that food banks account for donations / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à assurer que les banques d'alimentation rendent compte des dons.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Motion carried.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): This bill creates the Food Bank Accountability Act, 1999. What we're looking to do is create an act that requires food banks to ensure that all of the items they receive in donation are used in a charitable fashion. The bank—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member take his seat. Order, member for St Catharines, member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Spina: This act requires that food banks maintain records that account for all donations of money, food and other things. It arises from incidents recently where items were donated for the use of the food banks and were

misappropriated. If there is an accountability system there, then we can ensure that all of the food—

The Speaker: Member take his seat. Order. I cannot hear the member in his explanation. Member for Beaches-East York, come to order. The member for Hamilton West, I ask him to come to order. This will be the last warning for the member for Hamilton West.

Mr Spina: What it does ask for is accountability so that these records will be available to the public to ensure that what is donated for the food bank is used in fact for the people for whom it was intended.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Speaker: Perhaps you can help me out. I could not hear whether it was food banks or oil companies that this bill was directed at. Can you help me out?

The Speaker: That is not a point of order, I think the member knows.

FAIRNESS IS A TWO-WAY STREET ACT (MINERS AND FORESTRY WORKERS), 1999

LOI DE 1999 PORTANT QUE LA JUSTICE N'EST PAS À SENS UNIQUE (MINEURS ET TRAVAILLEURS FORESTIERS)

Mr Ramsay moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to prohibit Quebec residents from working in certain mining and forestry occupations in Ontario / Projet de loi 21, Loi interdisant aux résidents du Québec d'exercer certaines professions minières et forestières en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): This bill creates the Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act (Miners and Forestry Workers), 1999. The new act prohibits residents of Quebec from working in certain occupations in the mining and forestry industries in Ontario. The Lieutenant Governor in Council may suspend the operation of the new act as it applies to a specified occupation if it is satisfied that the province of Quebec no longer restricts the right of Ontario residents to work in Quebec in that occupation.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent that we go directly to second reading on the bill that has just been introduced by the member from Brampton, to discuss just to what lows this government is prepared to go when it comes to attacking the poor in this province.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Speaker, I stand today on a point of order. I was con-

tacted yesterday afternoon by one of my constituents, Mr Gary Malkowski. As members of this House will know, Mr Malkowski is a former member of this Legislature and a tireless advocate for people with disabilities.

Mr Malkowski approached me yesterday because he is outraged by the way the Premier of this province has now for the second time misquoted him in an effort to take cheap political shots at the NDP. Mr Malkowski at no time said that the move by "Mike Harris and the Ontario Conservative Party is the best thing to happen to the disabled in my lifetime." In fact, earlier this afternoon, Mr Malkowski wrote a letter to the Premier expressing his extreme displeasure.

When will the Premier learn to not use people with disabilities as props in his partisan gamesmanship and treat them and their concerns with the respect that they deserve?

Mr Speaker, I would ask you today to uphold the integrity of this House and ask the Premier to withdraw his comments of yesterday and to write a letter of apology to Mr Malkowski.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member will know that is not a point of order.

1400

ALLAN LAMPORT

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to make a statement about Allan Lamport.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Kwinter: Today we mourn the death of Allan Austin Lamport, who passed away on November 18 at the age of 96 and is survived by two daughters, Suzanne and Jane, and five grandsons.

I don't want to dwell on his death; I really want to celebrate his life.

Lampy, as he was affectionately known by all of us, lived a life in full measure. At age 96 he certainly has had the full allotment and then some prescribed in the Scriptures.

When we talk about him, we are really talking about a unique individual, one of a kind. My big problem in the brief time that I have to speak about him today is, how do I encapsulate what is Allan Lamport?

He was born in 1903. He went to Upper Canada College, where he was a heavyweight boxing champion. He was the captain of the ice hockey team. He was a member of their football team. He started a rowing club. He was an athlete par excellence. After he left school he had a job for a couple of years, came back, took up flying and started his own air service, Century Airways.

From there he decided to get into politics, and in 1936 ran for the seat in Toronto on city council, ward 2. He was defeated but that didn't deter him. He came back the following year. Not only did he win that seat, but he simultaneously won the seat in the provincial Legislature

of St David. So we had this unique situation: You have a city councillor; you have a member of the Legislature.

In that time he served under the premiership of Mitch Hepburn, and it's interesting to know some of his colleagues who sat in the House with him: Lionel Conacher, whom some of you may know, probably the greatest athlete Canada has ever seen, all-round athlete—I'm cognizant of what we say about Wayne Gretzky, but Lionel Conacher had it all; David Croll; George Drew; Leslie Frost; Farquhar Oliver; and Harry Nixon—just some of the people he served with in that time.

He came to the Legislature in 1937. He didn't spend a lot of time but he had some memorable moments. One of them was when he stood up in the House as a flying officer. He had enlisted in the air force in 1939 and because of his flying experience was immediately given a commission. He was attacking a member of the establishment and I want to read what he said, "This black-hearted American quisling, Henry Ford," for his lack of sympathy towards the Canadian war effort.

That attack had such profound impact that the RCAF immediately transferred him to the east coast, his seat was filled by Donald Summerville, and he spent the rest of the war until it ended in 1945 and then came out as a squadron leader and decided to enter politics. He immediately won a seat on city council and at that time, which was just after the war, became the champion of public transportation. He eventually went on to become the chairman, and I'm sure you know that one of my colleagues, Michael Colle, also served as chairman of the TTC. Allan Lamport was really there when they opened up the Yonge Street subway. He was a man who was the impetus behind the Bloor West subway. He did all of this in a way that defied normal political wisdom.

In 1952 he ran for mayor, and in those years—just imagine us sitting in this Legislature—you ran for one year. As soon as you got elected, you had to start running again. He was mayor in 1952, 1953 and 1954. During that time he was a strong proponent of Sunday sports and he is probably most remembered for the impact he had on making Sunday sports available to the people of Ontario, when you consider that in those days in the playgrounds the swings were locked up on Sunday because that was perceived to be something that people shouldn't be doing.

He also had a great influence on lotteries, on cocktail lounges, on public housing—he was a proponent of Regent Park—certainly roads, public access to all of these things. But in all of this endeavour he was also a true character, an absolute character who was noted almost as much for his malapropisms and what they call Lampyisms as he was for his political life.

I want to recount a story that some of my colleagues, particularly Mr Bradley and Mr Conway, will appreciate, and some of those on the other side of the House who were here in the days of Eddie Sargent. Allan Lamport was a pilot, Eddie Sargent was a pilot, and Donald Summerville, who was then the mayor of Toronto, was also a pilot. Mr Speaker, you should know—this is a sad

commentary—that Donald Summerville died in office playing goal in an ice hockey game. Having said that, the three of them had some drinks and decided to go for an airplane ride in Eddie Sargent's plane. When they were flying, they started arguing as to who was the best pilot. They mentioned that Donald Summerville had once bombed the Exhibition by mistake when he was in the air force. During the argument they landed at a military base, and Lamport, always on his feet, very bright—his first defence was a good offence—immediately took the military to task for allowing them to breach the security of that airport and land on their field.

I want to just quote a couple of very famous Lampyisms: "If I'm going to be pushed off a cliff, I want to be there." "You can lead a dead horse to water but you can't make him drink." "We've got to act wisely or otherwise." "He's so honest, he doesn't even steal from himself." "Bring my friend a variety of assorted sandwiches." "It's not a matter of life and death; it's more important than that." "Let's jump off that bridge when we come to it." "It's as easy as pitching horses." I love this one: "The campaign is never over until I've won."

I had a strong personal relationship with Allan Lamport because he was the man behind starting the airports in the Toronto area. He was responsible for Malton airport—now Lester Pearson airport—the Toronto Island airport, the airport that's up at Downsview. He did all of these things as a member of the aviation committee.

He was a lifelong boater. He was a member of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club. We used to spend a lot of time discussing boating issues. I was the chairman of the harbour commission, so I controlled the Island airport, and he had very strong feelings about that.

He also was a lifelong member of the CNE, where I served for many years as a director.

We had an ongoing relationship. I saw him as recently as six months ago. Here's a man who, at 96, was impeccably dressed. He always had a flower in his lapel, always had a twinkle in his eye—he was absolutely outstanding.

There is no man who had a greater love for Toronto than Allan Lamport. He took the Toronto that was known as Toronto the good; he made it Toronto the better, and spent the rest of his life trying to make it Toronto the best.

I want to close with a couple of his last comments, again these famous Lampyisms, in which he talked about what he eventually was going to have happen to him. He talked about his immortality. He said, "Should God spare me, I'd like to be buried in St James Cemetery." Lampy, you didn't get your wish. I noticed in the program at your funeral yesterday that they're burying you at Mount Pleasant. He didn't always get his wish.

He also said, "When I die, they'll bury me with my shoes on, going 150 steps a minute." Once, in a very heated debate in city council, he said, "Don't you argue with my Maker." Lampy, I know that, with a twinkle in your eye, you may argue with your Maker. When you're

dancing those 150 steps a minute, your buddy Harold Ballard will be there, cheering you on.

Lampy, we're going to miss you.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): It was just a couple of years ago when I last saw Allan Lamport, or Lampy, as he liked to be called. He was over 90 then. I remember having a chat with him. It was a beautiful, sunny day and there were hundreds of people at this event. I remember chatting with him, of course, as many people did, because many of us who knew him and were aware of his history, were also generally aware of his age. I think he had many conversations with people, including me, that day about it. I said, "Lampy, how do you do it, especially after all those years in politics?" We all know how hard politics can be on individuals.

1410

He did give me some advice that day. I was delighted to see in one of the newspapers that his grandson Glen Day read these words at the service for Lampy. Those are 10 keys that he gave for growing younger and for living a successful life. I'd like to read these into the record because it's good advice for everybody, perhaps particularly so for us in this House.

These are Mr Lamport's tips to leading a successful life:

"Like yourself for who you are and keep that well polished;

"Live to your standard without selfishly stepping on other people;

"When you have the time and knowledge, help others;

"Make yourself part of the lives of your children;

"Learn to be on time and ahead of time;

"Be uplifting as much as you can;

"Feel happy with all things;

"Don't let your fear bother or interfere you;

"Laugh at yourself in front of a mirror every morning"; and

"Follow all the advice and don't care about your age. Keep a happy life and love your country." Those were added by Craig Sievenpiper.

Mr Lamport was known to many here in Toronto as "Mr Toronto." Certainly when I served on Toronto city council, I can't tell you how many times his name came up in debates and discussions.

His civic career stretched from 1930 to the 1970s, but it was during the time in the 1950s, when he served as mayor, that he proved to be a man, in many ways, ahead of his time. Many have said that he indeed built the foundation for the Toronto we have today. He brought us the subway system, airports. For a sports fan like myself, I'm very pleased that he brought us Sunday sports. We all benefit from that today.

Lampy loved Toronto. His achievements and his contributions are absolutely incredible and too long to list here today. I noted that my colleague who knew him far better than I did listed some of those achievements.

Mr Lamport died last Thursday at the age of 96. He leaves two daughters, Suzanne and Jane, and five grandsons. I also noted a quote by his daughter Suzanne, I

believe it was, who said—and I'm paraphrasing here—that he lived a long and happy, successful life and that now should be a celebration of that life.

I'm very happy today to rise on behalf of my colleagues and say that we appreciate all of his accomplishments for the people and the city of Toronto and that we honour that. Today we express, and I express, on behalf of the NDP caucus our deepest sympathy for his family.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I rise today on behalf of the government of Ontario to honour the life of Allan Austin Lamport. I myself didn't know Mr Lamport as well as, obviously, the member for York Centre. By the time I arrived on the scene in the municipal world of Toronto, Mr Lamport had since moved on. To sit on Toronto council, I know the member for Riverdale—I'm not certain of her new riding—

Ms Churley: Broadview-Greenwood.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Broadview-Greenwood—would know there are many stories about Allan Lamport and many stories about what he represented to the people of Toronto. They've been recounted rather well today. I don't feel worthy of speaking about a man who had such a profound effect on this city, probably the finest city, I think, in the world, and the direction it took.

You talk about being mayor, the TTC chair. You think about him as a member of provincial Parliament. He sat in the same Parliament as the leadership under Mitch Hepburn, which is truly some accomplishment, to think that he had the memories of the Mitch Hepburn legacy of a government in this province still to this day, or until some few days ago. He was the Variety Club Humanitarian of the Year. He was the TTC chairman. He was mayor of Toronto for three terms, which was three years, and you spoke about that, member for York Centre. Imagine, year after year you run. Every year he ran, and for three years he was elected mayor of Toronto.

There are the three airports that he, it is universally accepted, drove to be built, and today we have Pearson International, one of those airports, as a testament to that.

It was a civic career that spanned decades, and it's unmatched in my opinion. But there are two things I want to talk about that I think changed the course of this city of Toronto, and I don't think anyone can take any more credit for the kind of city we have today than Mr Allan Lamport.

One was the Sunday sports debate. It's tough for us to sit here in this place today and even contemplate a debate about playing sports on Sunday. It's considered passé, so unbelievable, that they had that debate. Yet some few short years ago in this same Legislature, I was part of a debate that talked about Sunday shopping.

It was that many years ago that Mr Lamport spearheaded the Sunday sports debate. I spoke to my grandfather, who worked for the Toronto Argonauts at the time and who has since passed away, about it on occasion, and he was one person who tried to emphasize to me what a huge debate it was in this city to have sports played on Sunday. It froze along party lines, along religious lines, and for a mayor to take a stand on such a controversial

issue when he could easily have sidestepped it speaks volumes about him and volumes about his beliefs. He was attacked unmercifully from all sides, but he seemed to represent that point of view that he believed what he believed and he carried forward.

That was one major change; it changed Toronto, because we moved into a different cosmopolitan look, this city. It changed us because we became more worldly; there's no doubt about it. At the time, we were considered somewhat backwater-Canadianish in essence.

But I think the most profound effect that he had on the city of Toronto today, and in the old days Etobicoke—in the days when he made the decisions there were New Toronto, Long Branch, Mimico, Alderwood, Islington, all kinds of little villages that didn't even make up Toronto—the day he spearheaded us, I think, to put us in the forefront of all major cities in the world, is the day he pushed for the subway in Toronto. The subway changed Toronto dramatically, the Yonge subway line and furthermore the Bloor subway line. We will never be the same city after that, and we're the better for it. The public transportation in this city today is still considered one of the finest in the world. It was based on his ability to see into the future and his ability to make decisions that I think we would have difficulty making today, looking at public expenditures at the time that were going to be so large, but accepted by him as something that we needed to make this country, this province, this city one of the finest in the world.

I went to his funeral yesterday, and it was basically a who's who of municipal and probably provincial politicians and other leading lights in our society. Everybody had a kind word to say about Allan Lamport. There's no point in going over the same Lampyisms, as they would say. I'm not so sure that some of those, although I wasn't there in the first hand, weren't used prudently, judiciously, to diffuse difficult situations and debates. But this city would not be the city it is today if it weren't for Allan Lamport.

It is hard for me to understand, being my age; he wasn't in power even when I was born. But when you review history and see what he stood for, you know full well that we are accepting accolades today and the civic leaders of Toronto are accepting accolades today about Toronto based on the decisions made by people like Mr Lamport and others who sat on council 30 and 40 years ago.

In closing, I certainly send for our caucus our best, in a most regretful time for them, to the family of Mr Lamport. And what a family it was, a truly good family I saw yesterday, very close, and ultimately that was one of the driving, passionate concerns in his life, his family.

I know this is probably going to be an overused Lampyism, but I have to use it in closing. In true Lampy style, in my opinion and in this Legislature's opinion, I'm sure, he was not only unique; he was different. Thank you.

The Speaker: I thank all the members for their kind words and I will ensure that copies of the remarks are sent to the Allan Lamport family.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Acting Premier and Chair of Management Board. We've had serious concerns over the Tory fundraiser, your personal friend, Tony Miele, CEO of the Ontario Realty Corp, for some time. Under his leadership as CEO of the ORC, it has found itself before the courts in lawsuits totalling millions, trying to defend itself for not following proper tendering process in the sale of Ontario taxpayer lands and assets. Each of these suits involve deals that are benefiting your Tory friends.

Before the House today is Bill 14; it's being debated again in the House this afternoon. In this bill, section 141(3), if passed, will give the responsibility and powers of the minister to the Ontario Realty Corp. My question for you is this: How will this change the law in terms of how the Ontario Realty Corp must lawfully do the business of selling off public lands?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): First of all, your premise is totally inaccurate, spurious. It takes the character of an individual who has worked for the Canada Lands Co, qualified, ran the sales program for the federal government for all of eastern Canada—for the record, I think those allegations should be corrected.

The question of allowing the board of the ORC to be a different scheduled agency is one that's long overdue. There were board members, for the last three years at least, who have wanted that to happen sooner. It's time now to allow the ORC and their board of directors some more autonomy. It doesn't change the accountability the Legislature has in terms of the authority to sell government lands. It still has to go through an ORC process.

Mrs Papatello: To the Chair of the Management Board: What Tony Miele told his employees last night at 8:50 in a memo described exactly what the effect Bill 14 would have on that organization. What he said was that it would be administratively independent from you. It also says that it's going to have the responsibility of establishing its own internal administrative policies and practices.

This is the same chairman, Tony Miele, who is now defending himself before the courts as CEO of the Ontario Realty Corp for abrogating that same process you just spoke to, so that individuals are not being able to purchase property because they're the lowest tender but because they're your Tory friends.

This bill is then going to make what is currently happening, which is unlawful—you bring in Bill 14 and make it lawful. What we see now is that the Tory money and your Tory friend are again impacting on what the law of Ontario is going to be. What responsibility do you

have in defending the public interest and protecting us in those same sales of Ontario lands and assets?

Hon Mr Hodgson: First of all, as to those allegations, if you're so sure there's any shred of truth to them, I would invite you to say them outside where you're liable. You know there's no truth to that and yet you want to say it in here with perfect immunity.

I realize there have been problems with the ORC in the past and that's why there's a new management team. Tony Miele, the chair, has taken over those allegations that are before the courts. That happened before he was the chairman. I agree that there needed to be a change at the ORC. The next step in that change is to make sure that the organization can operate in a businesslike fashion. The accountability has not changed. But if you'd like to send over the memo, I'll take a look at it if there's anything more to it than that.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): To follow up on the question of my colleague, the reality of this memo, which was sent by Mr Miele, which aligns clearly with the skewed lines you have in your bill, makes it clear that the ORC will operate independently of your government, independently of any accountability to you or to the taxpayers of Ontario.

It is not a private Tory club. We're talking about potentially \$5 billion in taxpayer-owned property they are to dispose of. Change the name, maybe, to Tory Real Estate Corp. It would make more sense. Clearly, the document, again, allows them to set their own administrative practices. That means they're not accountable to you, Minister. It allows them to respond quickly to market conditions—code words for saying, "We can basically discard the tender process, and if we think it's a good deal we'll move on it quickly."

What you are doing is giving over all the responsibility for the \$5 billion in assets to a bunch of people you appointed to run the board and the corporation. Will you do the responsible thing and withdraw the sections of this bill that apply to the ORC, give it some accountability and give ownership back to the taxpayers, not to your Tory friends?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I would ask the member, if he has any shred of evidence on these allegations that he rambled on about in his preamble, that he make them outside the House. If he would send over the memo, I could have a look at what he's referring to. If he could have a page send that over, I'd appreciate it.

I guess they're not going to send that over. The point is that the accountability does not change.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Environment. This past Saturday, when pushed for action on the Oak Ridges moraine at the Clean Water Summit, you defended the status quo by saying, "We have something

in place that, if applied the right way, can be very workable." Your statement directly contradicts the advice you have received from your own ministry experts.

I have in my hand a report, completed in June of this year and signed by your assistant deputy minister responsible for the GTA, which says that if these proposed developments in the GTA continue, it "is creating a real possibility that the potential to obtain clean water will be permanently lost" in the Oak Ridges moraine.

Your report says that if your developments go through, clean water is jeopardized. How can you continue to not do anything to support a freeze on development of the moraine when clean water is jeopardized, and your own report says that?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Coming from a representative of a party that did nothing on the moraine when they were in power, I find this a bit hard to take, but I will answer the honourable member's question, because he and I were both at the waterfront regeneration trust meeting. If he had listened to what I said, he would understand that I said these rules have to be applied aggressively. Let me talk about the permit-to-take-water system, because that is the issue that is driving some of the concerns and anxieties respecting the moraine, and indeed a lot of the headwaters throughout southern Ontario.

I said that we have toughened the rules since the time of the Liberals being in power. I said that the rules had to be in place to ensure that every drop of water that is sought to be removed from the moraine or removed from any aquifer in Ontario has to be proved scientifically to be replenished. That's a commitment of this government—not a commitment of him and his quick fix, but a commitment of this government. We're proud of that commitment.

Mr Colle: Minister, you don't get it. This is not about water per se; it's about the fact that there are 55,000 housing units proposed for the moraine as we speak. Your guidelines are voluntary; they're not good enough to protect the moraine. The moraine is threatened because of these 20 major applications that are going to allow 55,000 homes on the moraine. That's what your report says: "Urban expansion with its associated extensions of sewer and water pipelines and development proposals in sensitive areas is posing significant threats to the long-term protection of the moraine and its water recharge functions."

Minister, what you've done is just the opposite. You, on the other hand, have said that maybe these pipelines should be extended, as you wrote in that letter to the chairman of Durham region. You said, "Extend the pipeline so the development proposal in Uxbridge can be built." Knowing that your own experts told you these pipelines posed significant threats to the moraine, why did you ignore their warnings and actually lobby on behalf of more pipelines and more development?

Hon Mr Clement: Let's just state for the record it's a GTSB report that you're waving around. Yes? It's not a government of Ontario report. I think that's the case.

Mr Colle: Well, the back says "Ministry of Municipal Affairs."

Hon Mr Clement: Listen, it's a GTSB report, not a government of Ontario report.

The other question I'd like to ask the member if he's interested in having a serious discussion—the official plan didn't come from nowhere—is, where was his party and his caucus when the official plan for this area was passed? Maybe asleep at the switch, if he's so concerned about it.

I'm talking about the permit to take water system. I have said that my ministry has a plan in place so that every single drop of water that is required to be taken out, based on a proposal, like for housing, has to be scientifically proved to us—to me, to my ministry, to our government—that it can be replenished. I don't know what more the honourable member needs, but that is a commitment we were willing to make that certainly his government, when it was in power, did not make.

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Mr Colle: This report that I'm referring to was signed off by his deputy minister, Elizabeth McLaren, who is in charge of the Greater Toronto Co-ordinating Committee. On the back you've got the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. I know you don't want to talk about the report because what the report says right now is that there are 20 massive developments for the Oak Ridges moraine that will bring 55,000 more people to live on the moraine.

Your refusal to protect the moraine and to rely on old, voluntary guidelines conflicts directly with your own ministry experts calling for provincial action. You have decided to listen to developers instead, who say, "Do nothing." These developers have given your party hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations. So instead of listening to your own report which says clean water is in jeopardy, instead of listening to the experts who say, "Freeze development, get a plan in place to protect this water," you're saying, "I don't want to listen to you; I want to make sure that the developers get their way."

When are you going to stand up for clean water, protecting the moraine and stop—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member's time.

Hon Mr Clement: I'll speak a little bit more slowly to the honourable member and repeat that we are doing something. His party is good at a lot of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Here's what we're doing. We're at the OMB representing the province and protecting the provincial interest. Point number one, that's doing something.

The second thing we have done is we have tightened up the permit to take water system precisely because we want to make sure that the water supply and the water quantity and the water quality is there for our generation and for future generations. It has to be scientifically proved to us—the onus is on the applicant—and to all who want to review it that every drop of water to be taken out has to be replenishable.

That is action. He calls for action. We have acted. He has the rhetoric but the record of his government stands by itself as a record of doing nothing and signifying nothing.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier and it's about the situation of child poverty. Yesterday we learned from the National Child Poverty Report Card that child poverty in Ontario is growing faster here than anywhere else in Canada and we know that your government's policies are causing that. But what was your Premier's response? His response was simply to say, "Hogwash." One in five children in poverty in Ontario and the Premier says, "Hogwash."

My question is about another one of your policies that's going to make the problem worse. We've learned that your government is going to slap women and children who try to use the Family Responsibility Office to collect child support with new user fees, new taxes. If they try to use the FRO to collect child support, they're going to have to pay between \$25 and \$100.

Minister, when child poverty is already a serious problem in Ontario, how do you justify hitting women and children who are already poor with another tax?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I know the Attorney General would like to answer this.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): We recognize and take the issues raised in the auditor's report very seriously, of course, including the comments he made about the Family Responsibility Office. Many improvements have already been made in the Family Responsibility Office; others are underway. It is the most successful office of its type in Canada and we should give credit to those who work there. More than \$500 million in the last fiscal year has been collected by the Family Responsibility Office on behalf of those spouses and children in Ontario who are entitled to those benefits. That is not to say that improvements cannot be made; improvements can be made. We are trying to make that system more effective to serve spouses and children in Ontario. We take the auditor's comments to heart and we're working on them.

Mr Hampton: I can't believe my ears. Look, the number of children living in this province who are in poverty is getting worse by the day. Your government's response: Those women and children who try to use the Family Responsibility Office to collect child support, you're going to hit them with a tax. Don't you have a heart over there? Don't you care? My God, these are children. Some of them don't have food. They don't have clothing. Their mother has to worry about the power being shut off, the telephone being taken out, losing their apartment, and you're going to hit them with another tax. My God. There are tax cuts for the well-off, but kids living in poverty, you're going to go after them again.

Stand up and say it ain't so. Stand up and say you've got a heart, that you really do care about kids who are poor. Say it, Minister.

Hon Mr Flaherty: It is because we want to get money to spouses and children more quickly that we are introducing some of these fees. Fees will serve, if you think it through—I ask the opposition to consider this—as incentives to payers to fulfill their obligations to their spouses and to their children. Indeed, those costs are passed on only to those people who don't fulfill their obligations with respect to their spouses and their children.

Contrary to what the leader of the third party is indicating, this is not a disincentive to honour one's obligations. In fact, it is an incentive for those who are responsible to pay to support to their families, to do so in Ontario, to do so quickly, to do it promptly, to do it efficiently, for the sake of their own families.

Mr Hampton: You had better go back and ask for a briefing from your own officials, because this is what it amounts to: When a woman now contacts the Family Responsibility Office and she wants a financial statement, she will have to pay \$25 for that financial schedule. If she wants changes made in it—in other words, there's been a change of circumstance—you're going to hit her with a \$100 user fee, a \$100 tax.

I've got a suggestion for you: Go back to your NHL millionaires and get the \$16 million back and lay off on the poor children of this province. Go back to some of those people who are very well off in this province that you've given a tax cut to and tell them that they should give just a little more, so poor children won't have to pay this stupid, disgusting tax.

Minister, I'll give you another chance. Stand up and say that these user fees are not going to be put in place, that you're not going to go after the poorest children in the province while you give the wealthiest people another tax break.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Once again, I think it's crucial for the members opposite to be aware of exactly how the new system would work. It's being suggested that the government would charge a recipient to find out how much is owed. That's wrong. An account—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Flaherty: If the member for Kingston and the Islands would like the answer, I'll give it to him.

The way it will work is that an account summary, updated daily, is available to payers and recipients free of charge, 24 hours a day, through FRO's automated phone service. This service is more current than a written statement is, in any event, and is forwarded by the FRO by mail. This is a fact: That kind of information is available to those persons who need to have that information 24 hours a day. It's free and it's available by phone.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is also for the Acting Premier, but I want to say to the Attorney General, you know full well that if

they ask for this in writing, they have to pay the user fee. You know exactly what I'm talking about.

I put forward today a proposal that would allow you to use the so-called Keg Mansion and the provincial land surrounding that in a way which would provide for 100 units of market housing and 100 units of non-profit affordable housing, which is so desperately needed not only in Toronto but elsewhere in the province. It would also allow you to protect the heritage buildings, some of which belong to the Massey family.

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I want a commitment from you today, Minister. First, are you prepared to protect those heritage buildings, put them under protection, so that if a developer buys the land, they will be protected? Second, will you consider the proposal to develop the land such that it results in 100 units of market housing and 100 units of affordable housing, and you use one to help pay for the other?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): If the question is about the Ontario Realty Corp's board of directors reviewing properties and which ones they should sell that aren't essential for the government to own in order to deliver a service, that review is ongoing. There is no need for the government, as I've mentioned before, to have its assets tied up, which will need to be repaired; to tie up more dollars that could be better used for the people of Ontario. We don't think it's necessary that we own things like golf courses or buildings that aren't necessary in the future.

If the question is on affordable housing and issues around homelessness, I would refer the question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I'll wait for your supplementary.

Mr Hampton: The reason I ask this is because one of the principal issues involved with child poverty is the fact that since you've killed rent controls and since you've eliminated not-for-profit housing, there are literally tens of thousands of children across this province who are either homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. Their incomes aren't going up, but rents are increasing by 13% a year.

There's a strategy here. It won't cost your government any additional money. You could protect the heritage lands, you could sell some of the lands to a private developer for market housing—condominiums, if they wish—but the proceeds of some of that private sale would go towards ensuring that 100 units of affordable housing—co-op housing or non-profit housing—would be built.

I'm giving you a creative solution that won't cost your government any money to deal with some of these pressing issues of child poverty. I'm asking you, will you take us up on the proposal? It won't cost your government anything; it's a down payment on dealing with some of those child poverty problems; and it will work.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing would like to answer this question regarding housing.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for his suggestions. I just want to correct the record. Rental increases were capped this year at 2.6%, not 13% per annum as he suggested, which has been the lowest level in 25 years. So let's set the record straight here.

Perhaps there is a fundamental difference between the honourable member's party and our party. We also want to help low-income citizens and homeless citizens here in Ontario, but these same old solutions are coming from those benches over there: Throw money at the problem, throw money at the bricks and mortar, so-called not-for-profit housing. Not-for-profit housing is a misnomer. The lawyers made a profit, the architects made a profit, the social planners made a profit. And who paid the bill? The taxpayers. Who got the benefit? It certainly wasn't those people who needed low-income housing.

We have better solutions and we're working on them. We have eliminated the first \$2,000 on PST for new rental unit developments. We've created a broader tax class for rental properties. We're trying to streamline the process for new buildings so that the taxpayers aren't paying for that but the private sector pays for that. And we have just recently added 10,000 families for rent supplements through the signing of the social housing agreement with the feds.

Those are our solutions. They are not the same old failed solutions of the opposition but they are solutions that will work to the benefit of Ontarians.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Despite the fact that 33,000 people from my riding signed a petition to keep St Joseph's Hospital open, despite the fact that Brantford city council passed a unanimous resolution in support of keeping St Joe's open, despite the fact that the Health Services Restructuring Commission stated the savings happening would do so regardless of a one- or a two-hospital model, and despite the fact that you have not responded to a new and creative proposal to keep St Joe's open, your ministry is set to close St Joseph's Hospital.

Now you have a letter from 18 doctors, all chiefs of departments, from both St Joe's and Brantford General Hospital, strongly disagreeing with your direction regarding patient transfer during construction. I quote:

"A premature transfer of services before proper end-state facilities are available to accept them cannot serve in the best interests of the health care needs of the county. We appeal to you to rescind and amend these directions so as not to compromise our health care."

Minister, will you agree with our doctors, our city council and our citizens and amend these ridiculous orders to move patients into construction?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member opposite may or may

not know, we have always taken into consideration the advice of communities. Certainly we have made adjustments to the timelines concerning the deadlines that have been set by the commission regarding transfers and other items, and we will continue to work with the people in your community in order to ensure that high-quality patient care can be maintained.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): There is a reason the community is concerned. In Kingston, over 70,000 people signed petitions to keep the Hotel Dieu Hospital open. It has offered excellent medical facilities for the last 150 years.

The Provincial Auditor in his report states that you are \$1.8 billion short province-wide to build new hospitals. This is right in line with our experience in Kingston, where your restructuring commission stated that the capital investment required would be \$94 million. Later on it was changed to \$108 million, with the community paying over \$30 million. It now turns out that the ambulatory care component alone will cost at least \$40 million to \$45 million, not the \$30 million that was estimated, and that the total project cost for restructuring will be \$145 million, with \$50 million coming from the local community.

Minister, will you now scrap your plans for our area and implement the blueprint outlined by the citizens of St Joseph's, which will save the local taxpayers \$28 million and ensure that top-notch hospital services are maintained in eastern Ontario, and will you put the province's tax savings into much-needed patient care services such as more family physicians for the people of Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We certainly do appreciate the information and recommendations that we receive from the Provincial Auditor, but as you know, the plan was to modernize and strengthen our health system, and that is what we are doing. We wanted to ensure that all of the money was being used as efficiently as possible, that it was being directed to patient services.

If we take a look at the recommendations that were made by the commission, if we take a look at their financial estimates, we at the Ministry of Health are aware of the fact that the projects are coming in beyond the original estimate, and we have indicated that it will cost approximately \$3.2 billion for the restructuring, and we've set that allocation aside. That is consistent with the Ontario Hospital Association. I'm pleased to say that we already have \$1.2 billion worth of projects underway and we will be moving—

The Speaker: Order. The member's time has expired.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is to the Attorney General. I've heard a lot of posturing from members of the opposition that aggressive panhandling and squeegeeing are not important to the people of Ontario. However, I feel that it is important to make the

streets safe for the people of Ontario. I would ask the Attorney General to explain why the government felt Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act, was necessary.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Simcoe North for the question. Yesterday I had an opportunity to meet with front-line police officers at 52 division in downtown Toronto and listen to their concerns about their ability to police the streets of Ontario's largest city. That is one of the reasons, of course, why we've introduced the bill, that we had information from front-line police officers about the tools they needed in order to do the job in Toronto and in the other urban centres in Ontario.

People have the right to be safe and to feel safe in their communities, on their streets, in their homes. That's why we introduced Bill 8. We believe in that principle. The public spaces of Ontario belong to all of the people of Ontario. They have the right to use those public places and those public spaces without being intimidated and harassed and in safety.

Mr Dunlop: I'd ask the Attorney General to explain to the House what activities the bill covers and the tools the police will have to deal with these very serious issues.

Hon Mr Flaherty: I heard yesterday from the front-line police officers in 52 division about some of their findings in downtown Toronto, about the aggressive panhandling, about the commercial activity by squeegee people. I use the term "squeegee people" advisedly.

In one of the downtown Toronto divisions between May 1 and October 8, we heard yesterday, 331 individuals were engaged in the commercial activity of cleaning windows on a public highway. Of those, 101 were females aged 15 to 41; 230 were males aged 16 to 60.

The police officers in Toronto and in the other urban areas need the tools we're going to provide to them. They told me yesterday about handing out tickets to people and having those tickets thrown away and ignored. Part of this issue is of course respect for our police in Ontario, respect for police in our urban centres. That's why through this bill, if passed, we'll be providing our front-line police officers with the tools they need.

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MATERS MORTGAGES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Attorney General. Minister, you may be aware that I corresponded with the Minister of Finance in the autumn of 1998 and again in the late summer of this year regarding the desire of investors in Maters Mortgages to see an out-of-court settlement of their legal action against the government of Ontario to receive compensation for their investment losses.

You will know that in excess of 4,000 individuals have an interest in this case and are hopeful that the civil action can be resolved without further proceedings in the courts, since this legal case was initiated in September 1994 and has yet to be brought to a conclusion.

Mr Eves was kind enough to respond in a timely fashion to my letter, indicating in both replies that since the civil action is going on it would be inappropriate for him to address this issue outside the court. Minister, would you inform the House of any progress made towards resolving this matter and would you indicate whether the government is open to the possibility of an out-of-court settlement.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member opposite for the question. It is a long outstanding multiparty litigation to which the member for St Catharines refers. There have been developments from time to time, as you know, during the course of that litigation. There have been discussions from time to time between the parties during the course of that litigation. It is a complex matter. I have been briefed with respect to the matter. I'm certainly open to any suggestions the member opposite might have with respect to ways to bring the parties together in that litigation, which has gone on for years.

We all know the potential longevity of that type of complex civil litigation in our court system today, so I'm certainly open to any suggestions the member for St Catharines may have to expedite resolution.

Mr Bradley: At this time, Minister, one of the paramount concerns of the investors is the length of time this matter has been before the courts and the obvious frustration their legal representatives have experienced in endeavouring to meet with legal representatives of the government to explore the possibility of reaching an out-of-court settlement.

Judge Sharp was appointed as a case manager in a process intended to speed up the case, but scheduled meetings with the judge and lawyers from both sides were cancelled for a variety of reasons on March 7, May 14, May 27 and June 3, and he was subsequently appointed to a higher court. No further meetings have been scheduled and no new judge has been appointed as a case manager. Investors, many of whom you may know are in their senior years, are worried that lawyers acting on behalf of the government are endeavouring to lengthen the legal proceedings.

Minister, can you give the investors an assurance that the government would be open to exploring ways to expedite this matter, either through a mutually agreeable out-of-court settlement or at least an expedited court case?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The member opposite will appreciate that this matter is relatively recently in the courts. It was investigated I gather by the bureaucracy during the period 1990 to 1995 and the litigation has ensued, I understand, since that time.

I can't comment on the particular proceedings in any piece of litigation involving the crown, as I'm sure the members opposite understand. I am interested, as I'm sure all members are, in any steps that can be taken to expedite resolution. Certainly we're trying to do that through case management in our court system in Ontario. It's met with tremendous success in the Ottawa-Carleton area. It's met with success to the extent that it is now

partially mandatory in the Toronto judicial region. If we can help expedite resolution of these types of cases, I'm certainly prepared to listen to suggestions.

LIQUOR LICENSING

Mr Bob Wood (London West): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

Before putting the question, I know all members will want to join with me in welcoming a group of people in the members' galleries who are visiting us from the London West provincial PC association.

My question is this: The minister will be aware of increasing concern across the province about large-scale social events oriented to young people where drugs and alcohol are illegally sold. What strategy is the minister developing to address this concern and, in particular, to send a message to the owners of these premises and to organized crime?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and welcome the delegation. You have an outstanding MPP.

The member is right. Illegal drug used at many rave parties is widespread and dangerous, and this government is prepared to work with police and municipal authorities to shut down criminal activities at these events. However, the problem is much bigger than rave parties as it relates to illegal activities occurring in licensed premises, and I assure all honourable members that we are following through on our election and throne speech commitments by vigorously fighting these activities, many of which involve organized crime.

Mr Wood: Mr Speaker, that was an outstanding answer. When does the minister think that these initiatives will translate into concrete action against this problem?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Runciman: Enough compliments, Mr Speaker. There are far too many illegal activities, like drug dealing, prostitution and money laundering, being run out of licensed establishments. Our government will be organizing a round table with our municipal and police partners to hammer out a coordinated approach to these challenges.

In the interim we are, through the outstanding work of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, moving to close down illegal activities in licensed premises. For example, the AGCO is partnered with the OPP, York and Peel regional police and other enforcement agencies in a project aimed at reducing prostitution in strip clubs. This effort, called Project Almonzo, has resulted in 530 criminal charges being laid and the AGCO has moved to immediately suspend or revoke many of the liquor licences for these establishments.

The government has many powerful tools, such as denying or revoking a liquor licence to ensure compliance with—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member's time has expired. New question.

CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): My question is to the minister responsible for children. Minister, right now at daycare centres all across the province where there used to be climbers, slides and swings, there are now only sandboxes. Why? Because your government has brought in new rules for playgrounds, rules that the daycares can't afford to keep. In Toronto alone, the city estimates that over 95% of daycare playgrounds will not meet the new standards, and this is the same across all of Ontario. Daycare centres have asked your government to help pay for children's playgrounds, but once again your government has said there is no money for children.

The Premier has made it clear that your government is prepared to fund playgrounds for millionaire professional athletes. Are you prepared to take immediate action to fund playgrounds for the children of Ontario?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): Mr Speaker, this comes under the responsibility of the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): The safety of our children is of paramount importance to this government. That's why we were among one of the first provinces to adopt the new standards of the Canadian Standards Association.

In May 1998, the Canadian Standards Association released a new standard for children's play spaces and equipment that applies not just to daycares but to public play spaces such as schools, parks and housing developments. This is an issue we have followed quite closely. We're obviously tremendously committed to child care. This year, we'll spend more supporting parents in their child care efforts than any other government in Ontario's history.

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Shortly after we learned of the CSA designation, the ministry notified the operators of approximately 3,400 licensed child care centres in the province that this new standard would apply to their centres. The ministry is not requiring daycare operators to replace all of their equipment immediately unless it is clearly in a state of disrepair and worn out.

Ms Churley: Minister, I don't think you get the problem here. The daycares have to pay an inspector to come in and inspect. Then when they're told, "No, it doesn't meet the standards," they have to pay to have the structures torn down and then they have to pay to get new playgrounds built. That is another tax on people. These daycares can't afford it. Our government had put money in to help the daycares and your government once again took away money for children.

The parents are angry and the children are scared. What has been your ministry's response today, to just give us a history on how this came about? What are they supposed to do, have more bake sales? Your "let them eat

cake" attitude is unacceptable. I ask you again, will you announce today that you will put money into rebuilding these daycare centre playgrounds, or are you just going to have money for rich hockey players? Is that your answer once again, Minister? What about the children of this province? Stand up for children today for a change.

Hon Mr Baird: The safety of children is obviously a very big priority for this government, for this minister and for this caucus. The issue the member raises—I should point out to the House that equipment manufactured or installed prior to when the standard was released in May 1998 needs to be brought into compliance as repairs and renovations occur. Damaged or worn components are required to be repaired or replaced to meet the new standard, but we are not requiring removal of equipment that is safe.

Safety is incredibly important. I do want to point out to the member opposite, who has said that this government isn't committed, that this government, this caucus, this cabinet and this minister are spending more on child care than any government in Ontario's history, substantially more to provide child care than when she was in power.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This government saying that they spend more on daycare than did the previous government under the NDP is a lie and you should retract that.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I will ask the member to withdraw the word "lie" please.

Mr Bisson: Not unless he withdraws the lie.

The Speaker: Order. This is your second warning. I'm asking the member to withdraw the word "lie."

Mr Bisson: I'm prepared to withdraw, but he has to come out with the truth. That's all I'm asking.

The Speaker: That is not an unequivocal withdrawal. I will ask you to withdraw it clearly.

Mr Bisson: I withdraw it clearly.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): My question is for the Minister of Education. Last week you stated that when it comes to meeting the needs of special education students, changes and improvements will be made. Jonathan Smith, a 14-year-old grade 9 student, has been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and a severe learning disability. Jonathan's mother, Gloria, says that all doors have been slammed in her face. Because of lack of resources at the school, Jonathan only gets three hours of special education a week and this is only on a temporary basis.

Three hours a week of learning is inexcusable. Mrs Smith is a single working mother. She fears what will happen to Jonathan if he can't get access to the structured educational environment that he needs. The Premier's promise to put in the needed additional dollars for special education students clearly isn't forthcoming. Will you, Minister, admit today that your quest for cost-cutting is at the heart of Jonathan's right to be at school so he can be

prepared for a future where he can make a positive contribution?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I'd certainly be quite happy to have staff talk to the honourable member about following up with the school board on this issue, if it would be appropriate. The reason that we have increased money for special education funding in this province is because we recognize that for many young people those kinds of supports are extremely important. We not only changed the policies of how special education funding goes to boards, so that those students that have the highest need get the highest money, so there is money that is protected to boards. They can't spend less. They can top up, and many do, but they also have money that is flexible so they can use it to do things that might better reflect the needs of their particular student population. The policies have been changed, the money has been increased and we continue to work with boards and parents to improve how we provide those very important special education supports for family.

Mr Sergio: Madam Minister, when it comes to special ed kids, it seems that we have a widespread problem that you refuse to acknowledge and commit needed resources to.

I've had a distressing call from another worried mother. Antonia Servello is a happy six-year-old who enjoys school. This grade 1 student needs to be in a special program for attention deficit disorder, but her school has no class suitable to meet her needs. Her school does not have the funds to hire a new teacher assistant, nor the money to even provide an assistant to work with Antonia's class teacher.

These mothers want their children in school where they can get the best education they need and deserve. How many more cases are we to raise in this House before you will take notice and admit that you have devastated special needs programs?

My question to you is, what will you do about it?

Hon Mrs Ecker: We have done a considerable amount. We have given the boards more money for special education. Let me also point out that when we started to fund special education, we went out to the boards and said, "How much do you spend on special education?" We took that figure and we topped it up. We made it more. We added more to it and gave the money to the board. We appreciate that there are issues that we need to deal with with the boards in terms of how the policies are impacting on families, how the money is flowing. What I would like to say to the honourable member is that clearly with more money in the system, with improvements to the way that money flows, which everyone agrees are the right steps, still there are challenges in the supports that many families are getting. We are continuing to work on this to try and work it out so that those students are getting the important support that they need.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Many people in my riding—and there's a delegation that live in London-Fanshawe—and throughout the province are concerned about supports available to teenage mothers. Teenage mothers on welfare face an enormous challenge in raising a child when they have not earned a high school diploma. The pressures and the stresses of caring for a young infant when these mothers are still in their youth themselves often make it difficult to finish school. Without a high school diploma, it's hard to get a job. The Harris government was re-elected in part on a promise to help Ontarians trapped in the cycle of dependency, help them get back into the workforce.

Minister, clearly these young mothers need your help. What is our government doing to help them?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank the member for London-Fanshawe for the question, also another good hard-working MPP from London.

Without a good education, teen parents on social assistance risk getting trapped in the welfare system. Our goal is to help them break that cycle of dependency. Research has shown that teen mothers who graduate from high school are much less likely to require social assistance in the future. Provincial funding of \$25 million to support our learning, earning and parenting program initiative, which offers parents support such as child care to help them complete their education, is a major part of the solution. This is an important investment in the futures of young parents and their children. It will help them finish high school, become job-ready and help the cycle of dependency. Our LEAP program isn't about saving money, it's about saving people.

1510

Mr Mazzilli: I understand that there's research that has shown that young mothers who graduate from high school are much less likely to require social assistance. As such, it only makes sense that we use welfare resources and programs that target and help young mothers. My question to the minister is, what are we doing to stop the abuse of welfare in order to help people that truly need it?

Hon Mr Baird: Our government is committed to ensuring that our welfare system helps only those that are truly in need. Programs like LEAP help underscore that commitment. Because we truly care about how the resources are spent, we believe that we have a responsibility to work very hard to ensure that every single dollar in social assistance is spent wisely and is spent well. To us, no fraud is good.

Our efforts have already saved taxpayers more than \$100 million. As a continuation of the crackdown on welfare fraud and abuse, we've allocated additional resources to help increase the capacity of our welfare system to conduct eligibility reviews.

Our government, simply put, does not believe that it's right that someone receiving social assistance could realize significant financial gain, for example, owning a second residence. Our welfare system, our welfare reforms believe that welfare is program of last resort.

That's why we've gotten rid of cottage-fare in the province of Ontario.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I too, as a representative of London, would like to welcome those individuals here today.

My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Culture. Yesterday this House unanimously passed a resolution. It called on the government to pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act within two years. Members of all three parties—and I thank you—supported that resolution, including you, Minister.

You pledged to introduce an ODA, once consultations were complete. Yesterday I spoke with countless persons with disabilities and many of them asked me, "When will the consultations begin for a new ODA?"

Minister, the disabled community does not recognize your process of informal, closed-door, invitation-only chat as a true consultation process. When you met with members of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, you said you did not know when the real consultation process would begin. Will you tell the 1.5 million citizens of this province with disabilities, are your closed-door meetings the consultation process? Or are these consultations on how to undertake a consultation process?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to say that we were very happy with yesterday. I got a chance to meet with people from the disabled community and have a chat with them about our process. I think we were very clear in the throne speech when we said that within a year we would come forward with an action plan that would talk about process, timelines. We still are committed to that and we continue to work towards that action plan.

Mr Peters: Minister, I've written to you to define an action plan, and I have yet to see that definition of an action plan. Your attempt at consultation is not enough. One and a half million persons with disabilities have asked for a consultation process that is honest and open and accessible to the public. Ontarians with disabilities want a formal consultation process, and to begin that immediately. The best way that I can suggest to you to achieve that is to form an all-party select committee.

You have received countless letters from disability groups, asking that a select committee undertake the consultations. The official opposition and the third party are prepared and on the record as supporting this select committee. All we need, though, is your involvement, your commitment.

Minister, will you immediately commit to striking a select committee of the Legislature on this most important issue?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me say a couple of things about this. In the last session of the House, the previous minis-

ter entered into a consultation process. She has talked to a number of people. I've spent a fair amount of my time in the last little while reviewing the reports that have come from disabled communities who wanted to give their input to the government, so I have first done that.

As I have looked at that and had questions about specific elements within that, I have met with different groups also, and that would include the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the hearing impaired, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Windsor-St Clair, please come to order. I cannot hear the answer.

Hon Mrs Johns: I've met with a number of different stakeholders.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker: No, we're stopping the clock. Order. Point of order?

Mr Duncan: The minister is not responding to the question, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. Start the clock. Minister.

Hon Mrs Johns: I'd like to suggest, just to remind the members from yesterday, that the Liberals had an opportunity to bring forward a disability bill; the NDP had an opportunity to bring forward a bill—in fact, one of their members brought forward a private member's bill. As we say, we're moving forward—

The Speaker: The minister's time. New question.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is addressed to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As you know, the northern region of the province faces a unique set of challenges to economic development. The vast distances between communities, the harsh climate which can impede efficient transportation and the cyclic vulnerability of the resource-based economy are the conditions that differentiate the north from the south. They are the factors that must be considered in developing public policy.

As the minister responsible for economic development in the north, what steps have you taken to help communities and businesses prosper in northern Ontario?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member for his question. Indeed, I appreciate his recognition of the challenges faced by communities in northern Ontario. These challenges and differences are indeed recognized by the Mike Harris government. We're addressing these challenges in a comprehensive economic development strategy.

In addition to cutting taxes, leaving more money in northern Ontario's economy, in addition to cutting red tape, in addition to bringing forward legislation like

balanced budget legislation to make sure that future generations are not burdened with additional debts and deficits, we do have unique programs to help out communities in northern Ontario. To name a couple, we have the capital assistance for small communities program, which indeed has invested about \$26 million in 275 different communities across northern Ontario. On my trips to about 40 different northern communities to date, like Trout Creek, Ignace and Wikwemikong we're seeing this support come into action, and important projects to support the way of life in northern Ontario communities.

As well, on a recent trip to Kenora and Timmins—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much for that answer.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the north is its great natural heritage and natural resources, which both contribute to a high quality of life and provide a foundation upon which the northern economy is built. Forestry, mining, hunting and fishing and ecotourism are vital to the region's development. I think you will agree that the government must pursue a strong program of sustainable development in order to boost the resource-based economy. But policies such as forest management, mining regulation and control of wildlife populations must be supported by proper infrastructure, including a highway system that supports the transportation of people and products.

Can you tell the Legislature how the resource-based sectors of the northern economy are faring under the Mike Harris government?

Hon Mr Hudak: Indeed, the Minister of Natural Resources and I, to give an example, are very committed to supporting the resource-based economy of northern Ontario. In fact, I was in Kenora on Friday. I was very pleased to be there and brought greetings on behalf of the Premier and the Minister of Natural Resources on the new Trus Joist MacMillan plant opening up in the Kenora area, which is going to bring 475 permanent direct and indirect jobs into northwestern Ontario.

In terms of supporting the mining industry—

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Come to order. We are stopping the clock because the third party has gotten very close every day to getting their question in, and when we have points of order at this point in time they miss their last question. I'm going to ensure they get their question. A point of order?

Mr Peters: Mr Speaker, pursuant to standing order 37(a), I wish to advise the House that I am dissatisfied with the member's answer and I will be filing the proper paperwork to have that answer—

The Speaker: The member will know he can file that with the table without raising a point of order, but I thank him for letting us know.

Start the clock. Final comment?

Hon Mr Hudak: I'm pleased also to talk about support for the mining industry, which is a \$5.5-billion

industry in the province—announced last night in Timmins, support in that area for mine rehabilitation as part of a \$27-million program, as well as a \$19-million investment in geophysical surveys and Operation Treasure Hunt.

I thought as well, talking about the Kenora area and—

The Speaker: The minister's time is gone.

1520

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Education. There was a very important meeting in Sault Ste Marie last night, held by the Algoma District School Board with leaders of the communities that are within that school board area. It was on the issue of the formula and the impact that the lack of funds, because of the way the formula was developed, is having on that board's ability to deliver programs. They were wondering if you really understood the issue of high density versus low density.

When the formula was put together for the Algoma district, the territory within the municipalities was all that was considered. Literally hundreds of kilometres of territory between the municipalities was left out, which means that the Algoma District School Board gets significantly less money.

The question is, do you understand that, and if you do, will you give direction to your ministry or the EIC or somebody to meet with the board to change that, or failing that, will you come up to the Algoma district and take a ride on the bus with some of us between, for example, Blind River and Sault Ste Marie or Sault Ste Marie and Hornepayne so that you understand fully and in a more personal way the issue at stake here?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I have had the privilege, and an enjoyable one it was, to visit many of those communities in his area. We quite understand that school boards in communities like the north do have significant geographical challenges. That's one of the reasons why the way we finance education specifically recognizes that, so that boards which have long distances and big geographic areas get compensated from that. But I'd be very pleased to have officials meet with his school board. I appreciate his bringing this issue forward because we are continuing to look at ways that we can improve the way we finance the boards and try to make sure that the monies they receive are indeed meeting the local needs, so I appreciate the suggestion from him.

VISITORS

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know the House would like to welcome Lazarre Gaël, who is here from Belgium on an educational training experience, and he's in the company of his cousins, Joe and Gloria Siddock of Blind River.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That's not a point of order, but we do welcome them.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to make a motion regarding this evening's sitting.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Klees: I move that notwithstanding the order of the House dated November 22, 1999, the House shall not sit this evening from 6:45 to 9:30 pm.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the consumers, feel gas prices are too high throughout Ontario;

"Whereas we, the consumers, support the Ontario Liberal caucus's attempt to have the Mike Harris government introduce predatory gas pricing legislation;

"Whereas we, the consumers, want the Mike Harris government to act so that the consumer can get a break at the pumps rather than going broke at them;

"Whereas we, the consumers, are fuming at being hosed at the pumps and want Mike Harris to gauge our anger;

"Furthermore, we, the consumers, want Mike Harris to know we want to be able to go to the pumps and fill our gas tanks without emptying our pockets;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass predatory gas pricing legislation," as introduced by the Liberal member from St Catharines, and to pass the gas price watchdog bill as introduced by the Liberal member for Eglinton-Lawrence, "in order to control the amount of money we, the consumers, are forced to pay at the gas pumps."

I affix my signature to this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a number of petitions concerning municipal restructuring titled "Bring Back Haldimand-Norfolk Counties."

"Whereas we, the undersigned, do not want a region-wide, single-tier supercity; and

"Whereas we support the 'two county' model representing two single-tier cities (one each for Haldimand and Norfolk); and

"Whereas we believe this model will give us a government that is closer to the voters, providing the greatest degree of 'accountability' by our elected representatives; greatly reduce the number of politicians; greatly reduce taxes through the elimination of multiple administrations, services that are repeated six and seven times; and produce further cost savings through adjusted service delivery methods; and

"Whereas the tax revenue of the Nanticoke Industrial Centre is to be divided equitably (based on population) between each of the two new counties;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to bring back Norfolk and Haldimand counties."

I clearly agree with this and affix my signature to it.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a certified petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail outlets;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

I have also signed the petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Petitions continue to come in by the thousands, literally, signatures related to the northern health travel grant and our need to have a review of that program. I'll read the petition I have in front of me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I thank the people for sending the petitions. As I say, we've had thousands, and I'm pleased to add my name to that petition.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I have a petition here that I received from citizens of Alexandria and Green Valley.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail establishments;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

I affix my signature to this petition.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MORE TAX CUTS FOR JOBS, GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 RÉDUISANT DE NOUVEAU LES IMPÔTS POUR STIMULER L'EMPLOI, LA CROISSANCE ET LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 23, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an

environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario /
Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 1999 et à apporter d'autres modifications à diverses lois en vue de favoriser un climat propice à l'emploi, à la croissance et à la prospérité en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak on this particular bill, another omnibus bill by this government, which really for all intents and purposes is a cleanup bill. It's a bill that does some damage control where the budget that was introduced last year by this government is concerned. I want to say at the outset that a lot of what those of us on this side of the House in the NDP caucus want to say about this bill was said so very well yesterday by our finance critic in his presentation to the House. What I will do today is elaborate on some of the points that he so effectively brought out and put on the record.

What we have here for all intents and purposes is a piece of legislation, a mishmash of things that the government has had to very quickly put together once it began to realize some of the difficulties that are happening out there, initiated primarily by the legislation they've brought down and the changes they've made in their four years, and in particular the downloading they've done of services to the municipalities.

If you listen to this government, you would think they are concerned, first and foremost, about the issue of debt and deficit, and that everything they're doing by way of changes in legislation and shifting of responsibility is taking us down a road that will see us, at the end of the day, be more responsible and more accountable where debt is concerned. But the sad fact of the matter is that in reality that isn't where we're going.

Our finance critic, the member for Hamilton West, very correctly said yesterday, rounding off some figures, that when we were the government, for very legitimate reasons, the debt of the province rose to some \$80 billion to \$85 billion. We were government at a time, if you remember, when there was a recession out there that was worldwide in nature, that was equal to the Great Depression in many significant ways. We were challenged, as a government, to be responsible in front of those realities, to make sure that programs stayed in place to support families and working people as they shifted from one job to another or had no job at all, to make sure that the fabric, the very framework upon which this province was built over a number of years—recognizing that the economy of Ontario is strong and has always been strong and will continue to be strong, because we are, after all, the industrial heartland of the country, we could run some deficit and some debt to get us through that difficult period and then at the end of the day get back to managing the books in a way that saw us then bring the deficit down and pay off the debt.

When the Conservatives were elected in 1995, we all thought that's what they were going to do, that they were going to take what they described at the time as a very

poor record of fiscal management and fix it. But in fact what we found was that the debt that was built up in those five years when we were the government, to some \$80 billion to \$85 billion, has now risen exponentially in the last four years, when the economy of this country, I remind people, has been booming. The members of the government are not shy to let us know that, to talk about that, to tell us about that. The economy of Ontario has been literally booming in the last four years, yet still the debt that the province is facing has gone up again by some \$40 billion. In my view that's quite unconscionable. You might ask yourself the question, why has that happened? It seems, when you look at the record of this government, that they're not interested in bringing the deficit and the debt down at all. What they're interested in is making sure that their friends and benefactors are better off, are getting tax breaks, are able to wheel and deal out there in the economy unencumbered by government, by having to pay taxes or by red tape or whatever else gets in their way, so they can make the big bucks that the government feels they so rightly deserve. To hang with government deficit and debt.

Surprisingly, in this province, we have a situation where we proposed, as some of you will remember, in the platform that we laid out in 1995, to in fact have no deficit. Imagine—we, the New Democrats, the social democrats of this place, proposed in our election campaign material of 1995 that we would have the deficit under control and to zero within a matter of two years by managing responsibly and accountably. This government said they would have it under control in a year or two as well, when they ran in 1995. We find out now, as we move in on the millennium, that they had no plan whatsoever to bring the deficit and debt down. In fact, they've run it up from somewhere over \$80 billion to \$120 billion.

This bill is about their attempt, after the fact, to try to find some ways to at least bring the deficit under some control, so they don't continue to keep running up the debt. We know, and they know if they're being honest with us, that to run up the debt in the way they have, they've had to go out and borrow that money. So when they tell us that we were mortgaging the future of our children to provide programs and make sure people were looked after in those very difficult times of 1990 to 1995, in fact these are the folks who are mortgaging—in some very good times—the future of this province and the future of our children, when they shouldn't be. So if we're talking about who's being responsible and who's being irresponsible, let the facts fall where they may. People can make up their own minds and judge for themselves. But I suggest to you that the reality is far different than the spin that you'll hear from the government and the folks across the way.

So we have a piece of work here that has in it some rather interesting components that are put together to help deal with the debt that continues to grow, with the deficit that we continue to run, and to paper over, for the time being anyway, some of the problems that munici-

palities are going to face in the next year as they try to balance their budgets, now that the government has dumped the cost of almost everything onto their backs and onto the backs of property taxpayers.

Before I go any further on some of the very negative aspects of this—and there are a whole whack of them; I won't get to all of them because I don't have enough time here this afternoon. Some of my colleagues and I'm sure some of the Liberals will point to some of the shortcomings in this bill and some of the damaging effects that will happen down the road if we end up passing this bill. I just want to comment on one small piece that could be some good news if it's done properly. I would suggest that “done properly” will not be by leadership from this level of government. “Done properly,” if it happens at all—if in fact we finally get this legislation passed—will happen because there are some really good people out there in communities across this province, and in particular in my own community, waiting for this legislation to empower them to go out and begin to do some work on behalf of small businesses and entrepreneurs and investors in those parts of the province who actually want to create some new opportunity, invite some new investment and stimulate some of our own small and medium-sized business people to actually take some chances and some risks and fire up the economy.

1540

This government has absolutely no plan in place for economic development or economic diversification or economic evolution in this province. All the good news that we've seen and heard and felt in Ontario, most of it in southern Ontario I have to say—northern Ontario is a completely different picture altogether—is driven by the fact that the American economy continues to plug along on all cylinders.

When and if the American economy begins to slow down or, as my colleague from Hamilton West said last night, “goes into the can,” we're in big trouble here in Ontario because there's nothing happening any more in the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. That's why there's seldom a question from this side of the House to the minister responsible for economic development and trade, because there's nothing going on. There's absolutely nothing going on over there. But in this bill we see an effort by the government to put in place a piece of legislation they've been toying with for quite some time now to give communities' small business investment funds a chance to actually get out there and do their work.

This program, for all intents and purposes to this point anyway, was actually picked up by this government because there was lots of criticism levelled by them re the labour-sponsored investment funds. They thought they might do something different that reflected more their value and their priority and their approach to how the economy might be in some small way stimulated. So they slammed the labour-sponsored investment funds, which by the way are beginning to catch fire and do some really interesting things around the province and invest in

some opportunities that I think will pay dividends down the road to all who have trusted their money to them, but the Community Small Business Investment Funds Act that this government has been attempting to put in place for some number of years now has been for all intents and purposes a bit of a bust.

There are groups out there, as I said, in my own community led by people like Mr Dan Hollingsworth and Deane Stinson, who have been working very hard at the grassroots level, at the community level, to try and find some positive pieces, some constructive elements of that bill so they could put it in place.

They're waiting for this bill to pass. They want to make sure that the time lines involved here are such that they will in fact be able to incorporate and get their program underway so they can help some people, because the economy in northern Ontario right now is not very good and people are having a very difficult time keeping things together and making ends meet.

If this government doesn't do something in the next little while to indicate that it has a concern, that it recognizes we have a problem and that they are going to initiate some plan and actually beef up the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, I suggest to you, when you consider the debt we've now incurred and the deficit we continue to run and the fact that this government continues to borrow money to fund that and to literally throw money away by way of this tax break to their rich friends and benefactors, we're all in the not-too-distant future going to be struggling to make ends meet, not just the north end of the province.

In many significant ways, what this bill should be about is introducing by way of a budget bill some new initiative, some all-encompassing, comprehensive strategic plan as to how this province is going to take advantage of the resources we have available to us in this province, and have had for a number of years, to get us to a place where we are again leading the world in our ingenuity and intelligence and technology and productivity.

But no, it's not about that. This bill is about finding ways to make sure that this government, at least for a one-time hit, has the money that it needs to make the budget of next year look good again.

Those of us who are close to our communities know that the only way this government was able to make its budget of last year look in any way positive or constructive, or not as destructive as it actually was, was to flow one-time money to communities, to cash-manage a whole lot of difficulties that were out there that communities were indicating they needed help with. They're not going to cash-manage in quite the same way this year the way they did last year, but there are in here some provisions that will help them deal with some of the backlash that they're going to get.

For example, they're going to move the actual implementation date of the download of ambulance services to municipalities. There are municipalities out there waiting for the other shoe to fall re how they're going to pay for a whole lot of the programs that they're now being asked

to deliver and how they're going to deliver those programs in the end.

This government has at least taken a little bit of the heat off. In this act they're going to move the actual implementation date for ambulance services to be turned over to municipalities for another year. So there's a little relief, a little pressure off the backs of the municipalities. It gives them just a wee bit more room to manoeuvre and takes this government off the hook just ever so slightly. I'm sure we'll see lots more of that in the next while as municipalities come, cap in hand, looking for the resources they need to do the things that they're being asked to do now, because the money is just not there. You can only go to the property taxpayer so often and then they buckle under the pressure.

The other thing they're doing for municipalities by way of this act which is rather interesting but is in keeping with the track record and the approach of this government where it comes to the question of deficit and debt and how they pay for their programs and, most importantly, how they pay for this wonderful tax break they've given to their friends and benefactors is that they are now going to ease the restrictions a bit, let up a bit on municipalities where it comes to their ability to borrow. So not only are we going to see the province now in debt to the tune of some \$120 billion and growing as each day goes by, as we run deficits in this province to pay for the tax break, but we're now going to allow municipalities that want to do so to borrow more money, so that they in fact can get themselves into some significant and interesting debt.

The trend begins to solidify here and show its face. We have a problem. You can't download the kinds of services that this government has on to municipalities, on to the backs of property taxpayers, and expect that it's all going to be a wash at the end of the day, particularly by a government that is still running deficits and building up debt at the rate that the folks across the way are. It just doesn't add up. The dollars and cents don't add up, the numbers don't add up, and we're heading for some really difficult times that will be of a nature that I don't think we've ever seen in this province before.

This government, by way of legislation such as the piece that we're discussing here today, has thrown out a few carrots, has thrown out a few lifelines and points to other people—you know, "Why don't they do this or why don't they take advantage of that little thing that we did there?" or, "It's not our fault; we're not responsible; we are just trying to manage a very difficult fiscal situation for ourselves here." Their approach is obviously to take that difficult fiscal situation and dump it on somebody else.

Take, for example, the selling off of buildings. We heard during the election that they were going to sell off Highway 407 and we were told in the House here before the election that they were going to take all that money and pay down the debt. They promised that.

1550

But, no. It went into the general revenue fund and now this year, in order to deal with the deficit and some of the

challenges that they're facing fiscally, they're going to sell off more buildings. Not just vacant space or redundant buildings, but we're talking about selling off buildings that are full of government activity, for example, the Roberta Bondar Place in Sault Ste Marie. What a travesty that will be—a building that was named after the first woman astronaut that this country has had. We were so proud in Sault Ste Marie the day that we cut the ribbon on that building, but now we're going to sell it off. Why? Because this government needs a quick fix to deal with the very difficult fiscal situation that they themselves have exacerbated.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): Again the member from Sault Ste Marie has indicated the same argument that we heard for the last four or five years, that basically you have to borrow to pay for the tax cut, that you have to cut programs to pay for the tax cut. I'm shocked to still hear that argument. I could see hearing that argument in 1995, perhaps, but that argument now flies in the face of the actual facts.

I'll read out to the member what happened to Ontario revenues after the tax cut started to be implemented. In 1996, we started implementing the tax cuts and you'll recall that this is the 30% income tax cut, along with the 69 other tax cuts, and now we're going to add 30 more. This is what actually happened to revenues.

In 1995-96, there was \$36 billion. The tax cut came in and revenues didn't go down; they went up by almost \$2 billion—\$38 billion was 1996-97.

In 1997-98, they went up again another \$2.5 billion, almost \$3 billion, to \$41 billion. In 1998-99, they went up another \$1 billion to \$42 billion. We didn't have to borrow anything for the tax cut. We didn't have to cut any government programs to pay for the tax cut.

What happened with the tax cut was that we got extra revenues. If you want to know why that happens, just take a look at the film industry. The film industry was floundering in 1995-96. Every budget had a tax cut that targeted the film industry. What happened there was that there was an exponential growth in that industry, to the point that whereas it was a disaster in 1995-96, Toronto was being called Hollywood North. Now there are 35,000 people there paying taxes. That's what's happened and why we have extra—

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): There were a couple of prominent professors who wrote a book about Canadian history and who destroyed Canadian history. I just heard a change of history from the member who just spoke. Everybody I've talked to who's a conservative economist says that you had to borrow money to pay for the tax cut and added \$21 billion to the debt. The Dominion Bond Rating Service, as conservative an organization as you can get, estimated that it would cost this government about \$5 billion a year in lost revenue in order to finance the tax cut. My good friend the member for Etobicoke Centre cautioned his government publicly—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Was it not publicly? Well, cautioned his government privately perhaps against this bizarre attitude of wanting to implement a tax cut before you'd balanced the budget. The more progressive and thoughtful members of the caucus, including the member for Etobicoke Centre, said to the Premier and the whiz kids in the back room, "Look, tax cuts may not be a bad idea, but we should balance the budget first." I agreed entirely with them. Ted Arnott was another one; Gary Carr was another one; I think Morley Kells and Bill Murdoch. All of these people were very wise about this, and I'm telling you, I'm still with them on that particular issue.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I'm pleased to respond to the presentation from the member for Sault Ste Marie. I think he obviously touched a nerve in the crux of his argument around the fact that what has happened to the balance of debt in this province is a very important one.

I am shocked to hear the response from the member from Wentworth who is saying: "We didn't have to borrow money to pay for the tax cut. We didn't have to cut government programs to pay for the tax cut. It's excess revenue. It's just flowing in." Then why, I say to the member, did we continue to increase the debt? The debt has gone from \$88 billion to \$121 billion during your watch. Take a look at that, for folks who profess to be so fiscally responsible.

One of the things that is really quite stunning in this bill is the promise that is broken about where money being raised from the sale of government assets is going to go. You committed, you promised that every penny raised through the sale of government assets would go to paying down the debt, this burgeoning debt at this point in time. Yet we find in this bill that's before us right now that that promise is to be broken, that you are going to take that money and move it into general government revenue, something you said you would never do.

We understand why you are doing that. We understand that when you took the \$3.1 billion from the sale of the 407, you used it for ongoing current payments. That's only one-time money. It doesn't come in every year. When you sell a road or a highway, you get paid once for it. When you spend that and you have that as part of your budgeted expenditures, next year you've got to find the money again to continue to support that budget plan. So you're breaking one of your fundamental promises. There wouldn't be that economic squeeze on you to find that money and to break your promise and use the money from sale of assets if in fact the member from Wentworth was correct.

The member from Sault Ste Marie, I think, has made a very valid point here. I've yet to hear anything to refute it from the government side.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Enjoyable, it was; accurate, I'm not so sure.

The first thing is, it's always interesting and curious to hear the member for St Catharines talk about government financing. The beauty of being a Liberal is that you never

have to worry about what you said yesterday. He never worries.

In 1995, under the leadership of Lyn McLeod, that party was the one that campaigned on tax cuts. You called for 5% tax cuts.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, no. They called for a 5% tax cut. You were the guys who called for that. Our tax cut was larger, I admit, but under the same principle, it would apply. So don't ever worry about what you said yesterday when you can say something different today, because it's a Liberal.

It's got to be a stretch when we're going to start taking economic theory from Bob Rae's NDP government. With fairness, nobody could have balanced that budget year over year at a \$12-billion deficit—not a soul. There was going to be debt accumulated regardless of what the government did. Now you may argue, as you did, tax cuts, in opposition or in favour, but the fact of the matter remains that you left a \$12-billion deficit. If we wanted to balance, year over year, and not put a nickel towards the debt, we would have had to savage education, savage health care, savage community and social services, and you would have stood in your places condemning us for such a thing. So you get it both ways, which in my opinion is not very fair or even-handed.

Finally, did you hear the one where he said he was going to balance the budget, if elected, in two years? You were going to balance the budget, if you were elected, in two years. Pardon me, but I don't know how many people out there are going to take much thought and consideration to an NDP promise about balancing a budget when you couldn't balance it for the five years you were in office.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie has two minutes to respond.

Mr Martin: I want to thank the members from Wentworth-Burlington, St Catharines, Beaches-East York and Etobicoke Centre for responding and putting on the table some of their own thoughts. It's good to have that kind of debate.

I go back to the point I was making, which is that this government purports to be fiscally responsible. They know all about balancing budgets and how to run government, and they're going to do it better than anybody else, yet here we are, \$120 billion in debt, \$40 billion above what we were when they took over. That debt went up. They cut taxes, they cut programs.

What happened, member for Etobicoke Centre? Who ran up that debt? Is Bob Rae still in the Premier's office, in some cupboard somewhere, coming out at night when everybody goes home and running up the debt? Is that what's happening? No, that's not what's happening. It's that you guys don't have a clue. You brought in tax breaks when we couldn't afford them. If you'd just thought for a second and done what the member for St Catharines said, let the thing run for a couple of years, keep everything in control, let the revenues come in, take advantage of the good economy that you've been privi-

leged to govern under and then at the end of the day, when the budget is balanced, whenever that happened—we put our program to balance that budget out in the public realm much before the election ever happened, and nobody challenged it. Nobody said, "That's not going to work," or "That's wrong," or "This is off-base." Nobody did, including yourselves, in that election. So to suggest for a second that we didn't have a program that was going to balance the budget in the year that we said is a little bit after the fact.

The fact of the matter is you've got a debt that is \$40 billion more than it was when you came into power and you're shifting the responsibility now on to the municipalities. That's what it's all about.

1600

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I'll be sharing my time with the honourable member for Waterloo-Wellington, who will also provide the summarizing two-minute response.

It's interesting to hear the opposition talk about what we did, particularly the NDP. It was interesting to hear the agreeable reference from the member from Sault Ste Marie, a friend from my old hometown, to the member from St Catharines. They said they agreed. It's something that we always suspected: The NDP are in fact in bed with the Liberals—philosophically speaking, of course, with all due respect to the individuals.

The interesting thing is that this bill is designed to protect Ontario families from irresponsible government spending that results in deficits and accumulating debt. It happened to have been privileged to hear a comment from the previous Premier—I hope the member from Sault Ste Marie hears this—Bob Rae, who spoke at an insurance brokers' conference this past couple of months. He said he found there was one positive thing that the Mike Harris government had. He said it was something that Mike Harris had that they did not have. Do you know what it was? It was a vision for this province, a vision of where the province would go. I have the direct quote from the former leader and I'd be happy to provide it to you in either audio or transcript format. That's what he said.

This bill provides penalties to the Premier and members of cabinet in the first year in which a deficit occurs. I can't believe—this is awesome accountability. A government has never had accountability unless you went to the ballot box, and in that case, in a lot of cases, the people didn't understand what was happening. But under this bill a deficit can only be run under extraordinary circumstances, such as a natural disaster or a war, and I hope we don't get into either of those.

Let's talk about the personal income tax rate. In 1980, a one-earner Ontario family with two children earning \$21,600 paid about \$3,100 in net personal income tax with statutory payroll deductions. In 1995, adjusting for inflation, a family would have had to earn \$43,665 and pay \$6,265 in taxes to be as well off as they were in 1980. Instead, this family would have paid \$10,600 in net

personal income tax and payroll taxes. So as a result of the rising tax rate, the elimination of deductions and benefits and the end of the full indexation of the tax system, while this family's income doubled, the taxes more than tripled.

From a party that governed for five years, with the hottest economy in the history of this province for a five-year period, from 1985 to 1990, I was astounded that they actually would increase taxes well over 30 times, when the money was rolling in the door like water out of the tap.

We have to look at the percentage of the GDP that this province was experiencing in terms of personal income taxes. Let's look at Japan: 5.7% of GDP in personal income tax; the UK: 9.3% of GDP in personal income tax; let's look at the US: 10.7% of the GDP is paid in personal tax. How much is it in Ontario? It was 13.9% before this government brought in tax breaks for the common person.

It was interesting to note that Mike Harris, as a rookie Premier in 1995, attended his first premiers' conference with nine other premiers. What happened was that Mike, even though he'd been in politics many years, felt a little strange. Let's face it: He was now the Premier of the largest province in this country. It was the first time he was at the premiers' table at the Prime Minister's conference. He was the only one who spoke about tax cuts, the benefit of tax cuts and what tax cuts could do—create jobs, stimulate the economy and so forth and get us towards balancing the budget—the only one.

In 1999, his fourth premiers' conference with the Prime Minister, guess what? He didn't have to do a sales job on anybody because they bought into the concept. They bought the theory. Ralph Klein wasn't a lonely voice in the wilderness. The other premiers—of all three party stripes, I'm pleased to say—bought into the whole argument about tax reductions. Where was the message here? The message was not only for their own governments but also for the federal government because they had money rolling in the door.

I just want to make a reference, if I can, to some of the taxes that the Liberals and NDP brought in. You know, the other day there was a howl about gasoline prices and how we should be reducing the gasoline taxes. Our Minister of Finance I thought handled it very well. He talked about how in 1988 the Liberals increased the gasoline tax by a cent per litre; the retail sales tax was increased by a percentage point, to 8%. In 1989 they increased the gasoline tax again, by two cents a litre; the fuel tax was increased by two cents a litre. The Ontario personal income tax increased to 53% of the basic federal tax. The Liberals introduced the employer health tax, which was levied on all Ontario employers, replacing a participatory program that we called OHIP where we all took a share contributing to our health care; that infamous tire tax; and, worst of all, they killed development in most larger communities with that infamous commercial concentration levy—unbelievable.

That's only the Liberals. Let's talk about the NDP. In 1991 gasoline and diesel fuel taxes were increased by 3.4 cents per litre. The surtax increased from 10% to 14% in excess of \$10,000. In 1992, they increased it again, to 54.5% of the federal tax, and then upped it again in 1993, to 55%. In 1993 the Ontario personal income tax rate increased to 58% of basic federal tax. That meant we were working well into the month of July just to have some proper net take-home pay—unbelievable.

1610

I reiterate a comment that was made by federal Finance Minister Paul Martin in his 1998 federal budget: "Canadians have paid to see the movie 'The Deficit.' They don't want to see the sequel." This isn't a Conservative comment made by a PC member of the Ontario Legislature. This is a comment made by Finance Minister Paul Martin from the federal government. We don't want to see it. So how was the federal government able to balance the budget? On the backs of the success of our Ontario economy. That's where the dollars come rolling in to the federal coffers. So now that he has the excess, he's a typical Liberal. Is he going to reduce it and return the funds? Doesn't sound like it. We haven't seen anything yet. What do they continue to do? They continue to tax, they continue to keep the high taxes, and we haven't seen a nickel go towards the reduction of the debt yet.

To conclude, yet again the statement that Minister Eves made in the press release on the budget on November 2: "Today's statement exemplifies the difference between the Ontario approach and that of the federal Liberals. We believe that tax cuts create a strong economy. They'd prefer to make Canadians wait for their tax break."

Watch the TV program *West Wing* and you'll find an episode where two Democrats were arguing about what they were going to do with their surplus. The woman said, "We'd like to have it back. I'd like to go out and buy a VCR or a stereo system with my \$700 or \$800 back," and the policy adviser to the President said: "No, you can't do that. We don't trust you to do that." "Why not?" "Because we're Democrats." Read into that, folks, "Liberal."

I will turn the podium over to my colleague from Waterloo-Wellington and thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this issue.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak, on behalf of my constituents in Waterloo-Wellington, to Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario, moved by the Honourable Ernie Eves on November 16, 1999. I want to thank my colleague the member for Brampton Centre for yielding this time. I want to put a few comments on the record this afternoon in support of this bill. It's a bill that merits the support of all members of this House.

It does a number of things. First and foremost it is a first step in terms of the government's planned 20%

reduction in the personal income tax rate, bringing the rate down to 39.5% of the basic federal tax payable for 1999, and reducing it to 38.5% of basic federal tax for the year 2000. It improves the child care supplement for working families. It improves access to capital for small business through improvements to the community small business investment fund program. It helps young families purchase their first home through improvements to the land transfer tax refund program. It encourages farmers through the program of the retail sales tax rebate on building materials for farms. It also reduces red tape in a significant way by replacing the employer health tax instalments with a once-a-year remittance for employers with annual payrolls of \$600,000 or less, which will be of substantial benefit to a great many small business people in this province.

This bill remains true to our record of listening to Ontarians, setting our targets and acting on their advice as we work to achieve the goals that we've set for ourselves. This bill is an essential step towards made-in-Ontario prosperity, and in my view this means creating more jobs that are higher-paying and more secure, making Ontario the best place in the world to do business and to raise a family. It's a vision of prosperity aimed at increasing the quality of life for all Ontario residents.

In the past, this government has set high standards and promised to do many things that the pundits and the sceptics and most particularly the opposition parties said couldn't be done or wouldn't work. However, the government has achieved many of these goals and now Ontarians expect us to continue to set the bar even higher: to broaden the scope of prosperity for more people, to further strengthen the economy and to entrench a system that can afford to be compassionate now and well into the future.

High standards and achievement have generated higher expectations of government by Ontarians. Ontario now has the lowest provincial income tax rate at the same time as we have the highest job growth rate of any province in Canada. This is no coincidence, for we know that tax cuts encourage and support job creation. A government that serves its citizens first recognizes that tax money is their money and that when too much is taken or when this is taken for granted, the whole system of government will suffer. We have helped turn this system around by recognizing this fact. Through our program of tax cuts and sound fiscal management, and by working to create a regulatory environment that fosters growth, this has been accomplished.

These measures include cutting taxes 69 times since we took office, and 99 if you include the tax cuts that were announced in the 1999 budget. This government has made a commitment to begin taking the first steps towards paying down the provincial debt once the deficit is gone, something I strongly support, Mr Speaker, as I know you do, from the resolutions that we both brought forward in the previous Parliament.

The government has eliminated the capital tax for an additional 45,000 businesses and has reduced it for many

others. The government has cut the small business tax in half, to 4.75% by the year 2006. The government has eliminated the employer health payroll tax on many small businesses. We have set up a permanent red tape watchdog to prevent and eliminate job-killing regulations.

We have allocated new resources to Ontario Exports Inc. to help small and medium-sized businesses grow in international markets and expand their export base. We have expanded our network of small business self-help offices and enterprise centres which help individuals start, plan, run or expand their small business. I would pay tribute to the member for Brampton Centre, for it was his idea to convert many of these small business self-help offices into enterprise centres involving private sector partners and local municipalities.

We have learned that to be successful in the new economy, employers and employees must be innovative. They must be able to acquire the skills they need on a global stage within technologically driven marketplaces. They must be able to compete over the long run. In doing so, they contribute to their own success and that of our province.

Ontario is developing partnerships to bolster this kind of success. Through the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade's strategic skills initiative, we are working to support job creation by providing the training and skills that both the workforce and industry need to grow. Last year, the strategic skills initiative was a one-year, \$30-million program in strengthening our workforce; now, it's a \$100-million multi-year investment.

Last Friday, I had the privilege of being at Mohawk College in Hamilton and I announced, on behalf of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the first call for proposals for the additional \$100-million program for future years.

These partnerships are a key to addressing the skills gap. Many employers have told me they would expand and create even more new jobs if only they had the skilled labour available to fill the jobs they want to create. The strategic skills initiative is working to eliminate these bottlenecks to job growth at places like Conestoga College in Kitchener and Confederation College in the north, where partnerships have been launched.

The request-for-proposal process opens on December 1, 1999, and the ministry looks forward to developing more job-creating and high-skills training partnerships in the new year.

As a result of these and many other efforts, we have seen Ontario move much closer to its potential in terms of prosperity and a higher quality of life for all of us. Since this government took office in 1995, we have helped to encourage the creation of over 600,000 new jobs. There are over 430,000 fewer people making do on welfare, and more hope is on the way as we double our work-for-welfare targets.

Ontario leads the country in job growth. Housing starts have soared, and our consumer spending leads the nation. Today, Ontario has one of the strongest econo-

mies in the industrialized world, leading not just the rest of Canada but all of the G7 nations in economic growth.

My constituents in Waterloo region are very fortunate—and Wellington too—because of the strong economy in our area. The area has become a job-creating leader here in Ontario and throughout the nation. Recent statistics indicate that the 5.9% jobless rate in Waterloo region is the sixth-lowest among 25 cities that Statistics Canada surveys. For my constituents, higher prosperity is being fuelled by higher confidence in the province.

Earlier this month, I was in New Hamburg for the groundbreaking ceremony for Ontario Drive and Gear. This is a company that produces gears for equipment used by other businesses, along with their flagship product that many members will know about, the Argo all-terrain vehicle. I was pleased to join with my friend Joerg Stieber, president of Ontario Drive and Gear, and his staff, for that ceremony. Their success is cause for celebration for the company, for its employees, for the community of New Hamburg and for the riding of Waterloo-Wellington as a whole.

Where our local economy is concerned, this expansion is yet another strong vote of confidence in one of the province's best areas to do business. With this expansion will come more high-skilled, high-paying jobs, which is always a reason to celebrate.

1620

I think of Ontario Drive and Gear as a cornerstone industry, a barometer of economic success. Many of their products are used by other growing industries. So it's safe to say that when their orders are full and they need to expand, it's a good sign that the Ontario economy is booming and that we are on the right track.

As the MPP for Waterloo-Wellington and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, it was heartening to hear the support of the people of New Hamburg for what our government is doing to help businesses grow. In their support they called for more of the same from this government, for further progress, the kind of progress that would be achieved as a result of this legislation, Bill 14.

I was pleased to join the Premier, my honourable friend the member for Guelph-Wellington, and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade this fall at the grand opening ceremonies of Denso Manufacturing in Guelph. This was yet another sign of a strong economy and it is an operation that will provide many high-paying job opportunities for my constituents.

My time has expired, but I want to encourage all members of the House to support Bill 14.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I listened with interest to the speeches by the member from Brampton Centre and the member from Waterloo-Wellington, and I got to thinking to myself, what about the 10 lost years? Go back 10 years, to 1989. The people in this province who were working had more disposable income 10 years ago. Your Report to Taxpayers tells us that. That's what it said. People had more money in their

pockets in 1989 than they have in 1999, with your own figures.

When we're talking about reducing taxes, we see you talk about payroll taxes. You don't talk about the fact that your government endorsed an increase in Canada pension premiums. They were there. They borrowed money from it. They said, "Canada pension plan premiums should go up." That's the Mike Harris government.

As we look at all these interesting things and the fact that we now owe, over the last 10 years, another \$80 billion, we're spending \$2 billion more than we were in 1995 on interest payments. This is your record.

But the real record is at Prince Charles elementary school in Sault Ste Marie, where I was with the chairman of the board and the principal, and learned that their special education students had eight educational assistants helping them a mere two years ago. For the same students, we now have two. That is the real legacy of your government.

It isn't just that you insist on taxing future taxpayers through running your huge deficits for the last five years; you're attacking our children today. When you run a deficit, you tax our kids, and you're hurting our kids today. That is the legacy of your government.

Ms Lankin: It's a pleasure to respond to my friend from Waterloo-Wellington, who is always so reasonable and calm in his presentation. I note that he began his remarks with a few comments about what's in the bill and then went on to a litany of his views on the record of the Harris government.

It's fine to be selective. I might choose to select some other things, like the 5% cut to all social service agencies, the complete cut to support for second-stage housing for women fleeing abusive situations, or the three years of cuts to hospital budgets that left them in a crisis which they're still trying to come out of, dealing with your restructuring plans. They're now hospitals with deficits.

You talk about what you've done at the provincial level. By downloading the deficit you've created problems in municipalities and in school boards. We could talk about the billion dollars of cuts to school boards, with another \$800 million to come.

But I actually want to bring the member back to the bill. He did make reference to a few items that were in this bill, and for the public's sake, it's an omnibus bill. It covers a lot of ministries, a lot of pieces of legislation, and no one can cover all of those items, but I want to ask the member about two items in particular and ask if he would respond to me on that.

One is the provision to do away with successive rights for employees of the Ontario Realty Corp. In any private sector business that is put up for sale, if it's a unionized workforce with a contract, just like a buyer would take a look at assets and liabilities and take on whatever assets or liabilities or debt there is, they take on the responsibility to the employees. Yet this government, with the stroke of a pen, is going to allow ORC to be sold off to the private sector and to say that the union contract will

be torn up at that moment and there is no obligation to carry that on. I think that is horrendous treatment of the employees and I'd like you to respond to that.

The other thing is, why are you breaking your promise with respect to all of the money from the sale of assets going to reduction of debt? Why are you, the Harris government, now saying you need that money for ongoing general revenue?

Mr David Young (Willowdale): It's an honour to rise and comment on this very important debate dealing with More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act. It was certainly interesting for me to hear the comments of my fellow members on this side of the floor, from Brampton Centre and from Waterloo-Wellington.

I thought what I would do in the brief time that I have is reflect upon some of the experiences I had on the campaign trail, experiences that speak very directly to the success, the prosperity that this province has experienced over the last four and half years, and why we had that success.

Let's talk about the experience that we had on Finch Avenue when, walking with a supporter of mine in the early days of the campaign, we came across a group of young people, six or seven, sitting on a porch, ages probably between 20 and 25. These young people said to me in very emphatic terms that they had absolutely no hesitation in voting for Mr Harris, voting for this government to have another four or five years in office. Why did they feel that way? They were very clear. They said it in a very few words. They said clearly: "Because we have jobs; because Mr Harris got us jobs." It really is that simple.

The growth, the prosperity that has been experienced reaches out to all, but particularly to the youth of this province, who had such a high level of despair during the previous 10 years, those 10 lost years.

Interjections.

Mr Young: I proceeded along the street to yet another residence, where there was another young person who was talking about and contemplating a move to the United States. He was in the computer field, and he said very clearly that he would be changing his residence, that he would be moving to the United States if our government was not re-elected, because he was sick and tired of paying more taxes than the American equivalent within his company.

That is why we have introduced 30 more tax cuts. That is why I'm supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I just wanted to remind the House that it's almost as bad to interject from your seat as it is when you're away from your seat.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I won't say it's a pleasure to rise and speak to this budget, because I'm very concerned about the direction that this government is going.

The honourable member speaks about the children and the youth and the future. I think he's mistaken, because government is bent and determined on tax breaks but what it's leading to is debt. You're giving tax breaks.

You're trying to lead towards balancing your budget, which you haven't done, but it's at the expense of the future. I think you need to be conscious of that. We need to not only think about today, but we need to think about the future generations, the debt, the legacy. What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind for the future? I think it's a terrible legacy to leave a debt that has grown by over \$20 billion over the past few years for future generations.

I think too you need to be concerned that it's a shell game that your government plays. You try and do something, but you pass it off to the municipalities. Downloading to municipalities is not being responsible. As government, you should be responsible. You're not being responsible. Putting things onto the property tax base is not the answer.

Dealing with the assets of this country, those assets that every one of us in this room and all the future generations paid for, you promised that those assets would go towards paying down that debt. But no, we're seeing those assets going into and being used and sold for general revenue, and that's mistake. That's a serious mistake. You're not thinking about the future. You're only thinking about the present and it's very, very serious what you're doing.

1630

And the growth, the claim that you have for growth in this province—so much of it is due to the health care that we have, and the American economy. But you're going to hurt that too, because look at what you've done to health care. Those great things that we enjoy are not going to be there for the future because of your policies.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Arnott: I'm responding as well on behalf of the member for Brampton, who initiated the speech that I concluded. I want to thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, the member for Beaches-East York, the member for Willowdale and also the new member for Elgin-Middlesex-London for their contributions and their questions and comments.

First of all, to my friend the member for Algoma-Manitoulin and the comments that he made in going back to 1989. I'm not surprised he would do that because of course he was part of that government in 1989 that was defeated in 1990 when I was first elected.

I remember the motivation that made me run in 1990. I was concerned about high taxes, high government spending, creating a spending regime that we couldn't sustain, couldn't afford. After the election and the New Democrats were elected, we soon saw a deficit of about \$7 billion or \$8 billion overnight, just like that. It's rather remarkable that the Liberals continue to claim great credit for the fact that they had a budget that was balanced, when in fact the reality is something very different. I would challenge the member for Algoma-Manitoulin in that respect and would suggest that the Liberal government of those days, while they enjoyed some great measure of prosperity in the late 1980s, squandered that prosperity.

In term of the comments by the member for Beaches-East York, she asked a couple of questions, called this an omnibus bill. It's 170 pages, I think, and I wouldn't dispute that. It brings together a lot of various proposals that are consistent with our budget and our overall program.

She indicated there were three years of cuts to hospitals, which isn't correct. There were two years of cuts early in our mandate, but in the third year planned cuts were shelved. Beyond that, it's my understanding that we're spending more on hospital budgets today than we were in 1995.

There were two questions that you asked and I'd like to get to those. We are changing the Ontario Realty Corp in many respects. We're trying to change the portfolio of the real estate that we own so that we're not holding a lot of surplus properties, such as golf courses and so forth.

I've run out of time, but thank you very much.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) : C'est un plaisir pour moi, au nom des citoyens et citoyennes de Glengarry-Prescott et Russell, de prendre part au débat du projet de loi 14, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 1999, un budget qui a été présenté à la veille de l'annonce du déclenchement de l'élection du 3 juin dernier. Nous savons que le budget a été présenté le 4 mai, un budget qui est bel et bien un projet d'élection.

Maintenant, le gouvernement veut nous donner les grandes lignes du contenu de ce projet de loi et apporter des changements majeurs. Ce débat nous permet de signaler au gouvernement notre mécontentement de ce budget.

En premier lieu, je peux constater que plusieurs personnes sont en faveur de ce budget puisque l'on parle de coupures d'impôt personnel de 20 %. Cela porte souvent à confusion puisque lorsque l'on parle de 20 % de réduction, beaucoup de gens pensent que nous allons avoir une réduction de 20 % sur nos impôts personnels en entier. Il s'agit d'y penser.

Ce gouvernement de l'Ontario a endetté cette province de plus de 21 \$ milliards depuis l'élection de 1995. Il en a coûté au-delà de 10 \$ milliards pour rembourser le 30 % d'impôt personnel qu'on a réduit dans les cinq premières années.

La dette de la province maintenant se situe à 109 \$ milliards. Notre cote de crédit est passée de AAA à AA-depuis la venue du gouvernement conservateur. Cette descente de cote de crédit va coûter aux payeurs de taxes de la province au-delà de 5 \$ milliards de plus sur nos emprunts.

Il faut se rappeler que le gouvernement libéral sous le leadership de David Peterson a été le seul depuis nombre d'années à pouvoir balancer un budget. Cela est arrivé en 1990 lorsque nous avons eu un surplus de 90 \$ millions.

Des voix.

M. Lalonde : Cela affecte beaucoup le gouvernement conservateur, puisqu'on nous dit que c'est faux. Nous n'avons qu'à référer à la bibliothèque de l'Assemblée

législative, dans le rapport de l'auditeur, et nous allons le constater.

Aujourd'hui, nous passons à l'analyse de ce budget. Laissez-moi vous dire que, depuis la présentation du projet de loi 14 en première lecture le 17 novembre dernier, nous avons déjà commencé à annoncer des coupures supplémentaires : 309 \$ millions étaient annoncés jeudi dernier, dans plusieurs domaines.

Dans les municipalités, nous allons encore procéder à des délestages, et j'annonce à nos journalistes de ma région depuis deux mois que nous pouvons nous attendre à une autre semaine «méga,» comme nous avons connue en 1997.

Ce gouvernement essaie de balancer les budgets, mais il est presque impossible pour eux de le faire sans procéder à faire des emprunts à long terme. Nous allons vendre de nos équités ou nous défaire de nos équités. Nous avons procédé à la vente de la 407, au coût de 3,1 \$ milliards. Nous allons vendre beaucoup d'édifices provinciaux.

Nous avons transféré une série de services aux municipalités, mais qui devra payer à long terme ? C'est toujours le seul payeur de taxes, qu'il est vraiment dans ce cas-ci. Le tout va être envoyé aux municipalités. C'est un déstage que nous appelons «downloading».

Maintenant, je regarde dans le domaine de la santé, ou même avant de passer au domaine de la santé, j'aimerais dire que le projet de loi 79 qui était censé réduire le fardeau de la taxe commerciale à nos gens d'affaires, 399 municipalités n'ont pas fait parvenir leurs factures de taxes finales en 1998 et celles de 1999. Donc, nous devrions procéder avec des emprunts à la banque.

Je regarde dans le domaine de la santé, dans le système des ambulances. Actuellement, le gouvernement avait pris la décision en 1998 de transférer la totalité des coûts de l'ambulance. C'était un montant équivalent à 30,45 \$ par tête en Ontario. Mais, ce qui n'est pas mentionné, c'est que, lorsqu'on veut transférer le tout aux municipalités, nous n'avons pas inclus le coût des assurances, le coût des frais locaux, le coût de location d'édifices pour les services d'ambulance.

Je regarde dans ma circonscription. Le service d'ambulance sur fin de semaine, le samedi et le dimanche, nous n'avons pas de services ambulanciers au base d'ambulances. On doit avoir tous nos employés sur appel. Cela veut dire que — je regarde l'ambulance qui est située à Rockland, par exemple — si un accident survient à Bourget, on doit partir se rendre à Bourget, 20 minutes pour y aller, ensuite se rendre à l'hôpital, un autre 35 minutes, ce qui veut dire un délai de 35 minutes, plus les 20. On est presque rendu à une heure.

Ce n'est pas un service adéquat. Ce n'est pas le genre de coupures que les citoyens de l'Ontario sont prêts à accepter.

Je regarde, dans ce cas-ci, dans la région immédiate, Rockland, Clarence, Wendover et dans la région de Russell, nous avons un service d'ambulance. Si une des ambulances est partie sur la route, on doit faire appel à

l'ambulance qui vient d'Orléans, ce qui voudrait dire, encore là, un temps d'attente de jusqu'à une heure.

Nous avons transféré une responsabilité. Nous avons décidé de prendre en charge leur administration. Le gouvernement a gardé l'administration ; donc, une municipalité n'a pas le contrôle. Mais afin de satisfaire aux gouvernements municipaux, nous avons dit, «Maintenant, on va se rendre jusqu'à l'an 2001 afin de garder l'administration. À partir de 2001 vous allez avoir la responsabilité.» Cela n'est pas un service adéquat.

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Je regarde en plus de ça les cliniques chez nous. Avec les coupures gouvernementales, actuellement on a fait l'annonce de quatre fermetures de cliniques de radiographie, quatre sur six. Une cinquième est sur le bord. On attend le résultat. Encore là, une réduction de service pour satisfaire quelques personnes avec une réduction d'impôt échelonnée sur quatre ans de 20% qui est annoncée.

Lorsque je regarde la restructuration des hôpitaux, encore là le rapport de l'auditeur général le démontre bien. Cette procédure va coûter aux payeurs de taxes 1,8 \$ milliard. Lorsque nous regardons les coupures qui nous avons été annoncées la semaine dernière, ce sont des coupures de 309 \$ milliards, mais le tout est à venir.

Lorsque je regarde dans la santé — je vais continuer — le pauvre M. Lucien Desjardins de Curran avait une tumeur cancéreuse sur un sein. Il a dû se rendre à l'hôpital. Pour la chirurgie, on lui a demandé de payer en avance 675 \$, sans ça on ne pouvait pas procéder, dont 400 \$ pour avoir l'utilisation de la table et 275 \$ pour le médecin. Est-ce que c'est ça un bon service de santé ?

Lorsque je regarde dans le domaine de l'éducation encore, on a dit que c'est une fuite la semaine passée de coupures de 800 \$ millions. Mais nous savons que le gouvernement veut actuellement couper les services dans le domaine des malentendants, dans le domaine des aveugles, la privatisation de collèges, universités, écoles. Encore là, seulement les riches pourront en bénéficier.

Récemment, on a parlé du collège d'Alfred. Encore, nous sommes en attente. Mais aujourd'hui même, j'ai reçu un document qui nous dit que dorénavant les abattoirs vont être obligés de payer 50 % du coût des frais des inspecteurs qui doivent visiter nos abattoirs pour faire les inspections des viandes en Ontario. N'est-ce pas vrai que c'est le consommateur qui devrait payer à la fin ? On a demandé aux abattoirs d'apporter des changements qui coûtent au-delà de 100 000 \$ à 200 000 \$ pour les rénovations qu'ils doivent faire. C'est jeudi dernier qu'on a fait l'annonce que dorénavant les inspections devraient être payées à 50 % par les opérateurs des abattoirs.

Je regarde les bureaux régionaux de l'agriculture. Nous en avons un dans notre région et un dans Avonmore, qui est dans Stormont-Dundas. On m'a dit qu'il y a une possibilité qu'il soit coupé.

La 417, encore là, un accident est arrivé la semaine dernière. Dû au fait des coupures gouvernementales, nous n'avons personne maintenant en devoir 24 heures par

jour depuis le 1^{er} novembre dernier, qui était un service qui existait dans le passé.

Le transfert de la 17 aux municipalités : Prescott-Russell devra défrayer au-delà de 9 \$ millions dans une période de trois ans, et la région de Glengarry-Stormont-Dundas, plusieurs millions de dollars.

Je vais donner maintenant la chance à un de mes collègues, le député de Don Valley-Est, qui va continuer avec ses objections à ce projet de loi.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): It's indeed a privilege to be here and join the debate on behalf of all the residents of Don Valley East. I would say to all members of this House, they should listen to the words of the member from Prescott-Russell, a former mayor. He certainly understands the effect of downloading, and that is a part of this bill.

I often hear the government members talk and debate about the bill, but they say very little about what's contained within it. Bill 14 is an omnibus bill. It affects 22 different pieces of legislation. I'm going to be talking a little bit about what's in this bill and some of the things that have been left out.

The first thing I'd like to comment on is the title of the bill. Like most bills, it's quite deceptive. I want to always ask, who thinks up the titles to these things? Some kind of ministry of disinformation or something like that? Perhaps the 60-odd people employed within the Premier's office? It is Orwellian in nature the way these bills are entitled. But as is often the case, the Harris government says one thing and does something entirely different.

Interestingly enough, part I of this bill talks about the Ambulance Act. The Ambulance Act is very interesting. The government's plan is to download ambulance services on to local municipalities. When they asked David Crombie and the panel, handpicked by the Premier, to make some determinations about what would be appropriate to be on the property tax base, the panel was unanimous and they put it in writing, "We are opposed to this kind of measure and we are unanimous in our decision." What does the government do? We get Bill 14, which in fact downloads the cost of an essential, vital health service, the ambulance service, on to municipal taxpayers.

I've heard members in this House purport to debate Bill 14. Of course, I haven't heard any of the members talk about what this is going to mean to emergency health services in this province and to local taxpayers. It is grossly a mistake. It has been pointed out by the government's own experts, by Mr Crombie and others. I really wonder about the priorities of this government. I think it does show that the Harris government says something on the one hand; they do something almost entirely different.

The other aspect is the promise that the sale and disposition of any government assets would go directly toward the debt. Also contained within Bill 14 is something which bypasses that promise the government made. I haven't heard any of the government members com-

ment and say: "Mea culpa. We've broken our promise, again. We're going to put the sale of any lands into general government revenues."

Hon Mr Stockwell: Where's that promise?

Mr Caplan: The Minister of Labour asked where the promise is contained. In the 1995 Common Sense Revolution. The member should know that, being his own campaign document, but conveniently wants to forget promises they've made.

Let me provide another concrete example, in this whole vein of downloading, the area of housing. Many announcements have been made by government ministers. Many press releases have been put out there. But the reality is that there are no new provincial dollars going into housing, only monies that have been transferred from the federal government. They just recycle federal dollars and then try to claim the credit for it.

It's even worse. Minister after minister makes some fantastic claim that the province will be providing help to Ontarians who are homeless or on the verge of becoming homeless. Today in the house the minister even claimed that 10,000 new rent supplement units are going to be created, with federal money of course, yet provincial data show that since December of last year, 3,300 rent supplement units have been eliminated by the Harris government. Again, we say something on the one hand; we do something entirely different. It's a repeated pattern and it's something this House has seen

In their election document, the government promised to bring in shelter allowances, and one of the first acts of this government was to cut shelter allowances.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Why do we have to pay welfare for refugees and Ottawa lets them in?

Mr Caplan: I hear the Attorney General. He's very sorry that the government has broken their promise as well. It gets even worse. The Harris government is intent on transferring housing down to municipalities, just adding further and further costs.

As I said, Bill 14 transfers 50% of ambulance services, and more on the way, down to municipalities, down to municipal taxpayers. It means a cut in service. It means more costs for municipal taxpayers.

The transfer on social housing will do the same. The Harris government, contrary to their own experts, their own Who Does What panel, has essentially skimmed about \$58 million of federal money for the risk for this housing.

What have they done? They said, "Terrific, we're going to take \$29 million and put it into a capital reserve fund, not transfer it on to the municipalities along with the risks, along with the administration, along with the costs." The Harris government is skimming that money off the top, taking it away from municipalities. The other half of the money is totally unaccounted for. When asked in estimates about this yesterday, there was no reply from the government. It is incredibly shameful. I believe that Mike Harris plans on stealing this \$29 million from the municipalities and leaving municipal taxpayers to hold the bag.

I say to Ontarians, "Do you want any further proof?" Mike Harris has downloaded the cost of hostels and shelters on to municipalities. The province used to pay 100% of the cost of hostels and shelters. They said, "Nope, that's not what we're going to do. We'll now pay for 80% and we'll ask municipal taxpayers to pay for an additional 20%"—a further download. Interestingly enough, what they did surreptitiously, what they did quietly, was cap the amount they spent on hostels. So the city of Toronto is now paying closer to 30% of the cost. So the government says one thing and they do something else. Municipal taxpayers are left picking up the cost that this government is bent on offloading onto them, and Mike Harris is stealing the money from municipalities like the city of Toronto.

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Also, the whole issue of downloading is worth examining. This week the region of Peel unveiled the results of a technical audit on the housing stock and the associated costs that would come with maintaining it. I should add—

Hon Mr Stockwell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: "Stealing" is out of order. You can't accuse the Premier of stealing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I didn't find anything out of order. He was making a general comment that I found acceptable.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Point of order, Mr Speaker: Are you telling me that if you say the Premier is stealing, you're not out of order?

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry, I didn't find it a point of order.

Mr Caplan: I would add that the Provincial Auditor also highlighted this, for the ministry to do these technical audits just to find out what the cost of this download on to municipalities would be. Interestingly enough, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing never performed the technical audits. But Peel did, anyway. The region of Peel did the audits, and what did they find? Their conclusion is very dramatic.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am very confused, because in this House in the past, when reference has been made to stealing, that has been ruled out of order. As a member of this House, I really do believe it's important that we retain the integrity of this place. I would ask you to rule on whether it's appropriate for the member to withdraw his statement.

The Acting Speaker: I've already ruled on that point and I've ruled it not out of order.

Mr Caplan: The region of Peel's taxpayers are being asked to pay \$57 million just to break even. If you extend this to all the municipalities across Ontario, that's \$1 billion that the Harris government has forced on to local taxpayers, left them holding the bag. I can see the government members are very upset about this. They want to protect their taxpayers—

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It's with some pleasure that I get a chance to respond to what was said in the previous speech, because I can certainly see the ire—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'm asking the members of the government to please calm down. The member from James Bay is trying to present—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: If you don't calm down, I'll have to name you.

Mr Bisson: I was just saying it's interesting to note the reaction of the government to the comments that the member from Oriole made—Don Valley East, as it's called now. The government says, "You can do and say anything you want over there." That's the point; that's why we get mad on this side. These guys do what they want without regard for the democratic process.

I take a look at the last five years in this place. We have a government who decided by way of decree that it was going to amalgamate all of the cities around Toronto, even though the people of the cities of Toronto had referendums where they said, "No, do not merge our cities into one." This government didn't listen. All of a sudden the member from Bedrock—or Etobicoke; I forget the name of the riding. Your indulgence, Mr Speaker, Bedrock is not the right—

The Acting Speaker: Will you please take your seat. The member should refer to other members by their ridings.

Mr Bisson: I apologize to the member across the way. I was trying to find the name of the riding. The only name that came to me was "Yabba dabba doo," and I really apologize to the member across the way—the member for Etobicoke, I think it is.

There's a frustration, not only on the part of the members of the opposition, but also by the public, because this government, quite frankly, goes ahead and does what it wants. It doesn't listen to anybody. Then they accuse us in the opposition of doing only what we want. I think we are a little bit more democratic than that, and I think the government should do the same.

Hon Mr Stockwell: To try to deal with the debate that's before us today, I think what the member was doing was simply forgetting one very important fact when he was outlining his dissertation here today. Yes, there were some transfers. No one denies there were transfers. All municipalities know there were transfers. But in your rush to outline the issue, you left out a very integral part of the debate, and I don't think it's the fairest approach to take to the debate. Yes, ambulances were transferred down. We appreciate that. You may have argument with that, and I understand. Yes, social housing was transferred down. You may have argument with that as well, and I appreciate that argument. But to leave it to the people out there that this was all that was done is profoundly unfair. You know, as I know, the transfer included passing up costs for part of education.

Mr Caplan: One quarter.

Hon Mr Stockwell: My friend, whether or not you can determine exact dollars and cents, you simply omitted to provide that information, as if all that happened was that provincial transfers went one way. There is some discrepancy by region about exactly the dollars and cents that were transferred and taken away. I know in my area there is some debate that maybe the municipalities got stuck with more costs, but there are a number of municipalities out there that did better than Toronto, that received more dollars in transfers than they got taken back. The argument isn't whether or not the dollars and cents; the argument is that you have the gall to stand there and pretend it didn't happen. You have the gall to stand there and tell the whole world that all that was done was pass-downs.

Ms Lankin: Pot calling the kettle black.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I don't want to hear from the member from Beaches. You weren't here earlier, and I think if you had been here earlier, you would have heard the comments that were made that were completely inappropriate and unacceptable. I wouldn't expect them from you, nor would I make those comments myself. So I would suggest that the government benches have reason to be upset when a member says—

The Acting Speaker: Further comments and questions?

Mr Peters: I just want to compliment my honourable friend from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for his comments.

I think a lot of the members of this government lose sight of the important role municipalities play. You have not treated municipalities with any respect. Municipalities are the level of government closest to the people. You have constantly downloaded, downloaded, downloaded. Sure, you've got your community reinvestment fund that's propping them up, but we know you've got \$600 million more to cut and those community reinvestment funds are going to disappear. That's when we're going to see those property taxes rise and those new user fees come along.

Look in this budget. The Ontario Realty Corp is taking those individuals away from public service. We've heard about it in this House and we're seeing the problems that are taking place down there. At least as public servants they are accountable to the people of this province and to this Legislature, but in taking them away and putting them into a private agency we're losing that accountability. Taking away the Toronto Stock Exchange and turning that into a for-profit agency is not the direction we should be going.

Something else you should be extremely concerned about is the property tax changes. You talked about how wonderful you're making things for municipalities. You have caused so much confusion with the property tax changes that have taken place in this province. You've got it in this budget that it's like Big Brother is watching, because municipalities are going to have to send information to the province to make sure they're preparing their tax bills in the proper way. It's very dangerous. We

talked about the debt earlier. Because of all the property tax changes that your government has implemented, which you think are so wonderful, you're giving municipalities that room to go and borrow more money. You shouldn't be doing that. That is not a responsible way to govern and deal with the tax dollars in this province. I think those changes that you're making are going to come back and haunt the future generations of this province.

Ms Lankin: I guess the member from Don Valley East provoked a response from the member from Etobicoke Centre. You can tell when you've got the former Speaker's attention and you've triggered his temper when he starts yelling, "I don't want to hear from the member for Beaches-East York." Well, sorry, here I am.

In response to his comments that I wasn't here, he well knows this precinct, and where I was immediately outside, has these proceedings so that members can follow and can continue their work. So that apology is accepted from the member.

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What provoked that response from him towards me was that I said, "That's like the pot calling the kettle black." I think all too often in this House people are very selective about the information they put forward, and I wouldn't point fingers across at that side because I think it happens all too often and I hear it every day in question period in responses from ministers in this place.

Two issues that I continue to want to raise and to have some response on—and I asked your friend and my friend from Waterloo-Wellington, and he was unable to respond to me. Perhaps the members from the Liberal caucus have comment on this. None of the government members have raised two issues that are in this bill as they speak to it—talking about being selective about what you want to talk about—one, the fact that you are taking away successor rights for employees of the Ontario Realty Corp. You choose, if you are to sell that, to strip them of their contract-negotiated rights. Every private sector company that is put up for sale, when a company buys it they have to look at the assets and liabilities and the status of the company, including any contract it has with its employees. You are stripping and doing away with the successor rights of those employees, and no one here will stand up and defend that and say why.

The second issue is the promise that you as a government made in the Common Sense Revolution and the Blueprint that every penny from the sale of government assets would go directly towards paying down the debt, that not a penny of that would go into consolidated revenues and the general fund. In this bill, you explicitly have a provision that says cabinet can direct that money into general revenue. Just tell me why.

The Acting Speaker: Response, member for Don Valley East.

Mr Caplan: It's very interesting listening to the comments, and I'd like to thank the members for Timmins-James Bay, Etobicoke Centre, Elgin-Middlesex-London and Beaches-East York for their comments. No fact that I

presented is untrue. In fact, everything that I said is absolutely accurate and I stand behind every word. To hear the member for Etobicoke Centre try to present some kind of other facts is simply—

Interjection.

Mr Caplan: You may not want to hear it, my friend, but I must tell you that you cannot be selective in what you hear and what you say. This government has broken its promise on several occasions, and I've highlighted where they've done that. In fact, this government has also taken advantage of municipal taxpayers. They have off-loaded responsibilities—

Hon Mr Stockwell: Stop stealing. We don't want to hear you any more.

The Acting Speaker: Stock the clock. I would ask the member for Etobicoke Centre to withdraw that remark. It was directed at the member, and it's totally unacceptable in this place.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I withdraw.

Mr Caplan: I would ask him to back up any of his statements. I would ask him to show us which municipalities have gained in this whole transfer of responsibilities and municipal downloading, because he can't and he knows he can't, and I have absolutely shown that to be the truth.

The government members also selectively do not say that this government has added \$21 billion to the debt, with another \$4 billion which has been added—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke Centre knows, because he was in this chair before, that you refer to members by their riding and not by their name, and particularly their last name in the way that you did.

Mr Caplan: I know that it's an embarrassment to this government that their credit rating is the same as it was under Bob Rae and the NDP, and that's very hard for them to take.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I am pleased to rise this afternoon to speak on behalf of the constituents of Thornhill on Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario.

All of us remember how Ontario suffered in the early 1990s. Our families all lived daily with the fear of job loss and all too many of us had friends and family members who struggled to find work and feed their families in a high-tax, high-deficit economy with no growth or jobs.

It's hard enough to make ends meet on what you get paid; it's even harder when you don't have a job. For years, Ontario families were getting poorer because of ever-increasing taxes, and those same high taxes were driving jobs and investment out of Ontario. Because of our tax cut, as well as the strong economic growth it has helped to stimulate, a typical two-income family making \$60,000 will have \$1,385 more each year to spend however they want.

If we could only convince the federal Liberals to cut taxes, all Ontarians would be better off. The federal Liberals still don't get it. Tax cuts create jobs.

Business people and economists agree that payroll taxes are one of the major barriers to job creation. When Mike Harris proposed a 30% tax cut in the 1995 election, the Liberals and the NDP said it could not be done. They both wanted to go back to the same system that hadn't worked for either of them: trying to boost the economy by hiking taxes. Every time the NDP raised taxes, their revenues actually fell, but they never seemed to learn that tax cuts create jobs and stimulate the economy.

Thanks to Mike Harris's strong leadership, Ontario taxes went down 69 times and the take-home pay for working families went up for the first time in a decade. At the same time, these cuts also fuelled 615,000 net new jobs since 1995—the biggest job increase in Canadian history.

With Ontario taxpayers keeping more of their hard-earned money, they now have money to spend on more than just the basic necessities. In my riding of Thornhill this increased disposable income has flowed into many numerous local businesses, which in turn have been able to grow and increase sales and hire staff.

Let me give some examples here today. This theory really does work for all Ontarians, both small and large businesses.

Spa Ambience Salon started out in 1994 as a small sole-proprietorship with two employees. Under our government's leadership and initial tax cutting during our first mandate, Spa Ambience Salon has seen an increase in clients seeking the services provided by the salon. Today they have grown to a 1,400-square-foot complex, employing seven people.

At Seven View Chrysler in Concord, owner Pat Magarelli has spoken with me about the growth in the automotive industry and his dealership in particular. He has noted that sales of new cars have increased over the past few years. People have extra money and are more optimistic about their futures. The goal of obtaining a vehicle has now become a reality. Joe Magarelli, the service manager, has told me that due to the increase in sales, they've had to increase staff in their service department, which has resulted in more jobs for people in Thornhill and the people of Ontario.

Peter Eliopoulos, co-owner of Peter and Paul's Restaurant has seen an improved economy in Ontario directly benefiting his operation. Not only have bookings and events increased over the past years, his company has increased floor space and staffing. This requirement has led to the construction of Bellagio Banquet Hall in Concord. This new facility meant that Mr Eliopoulos had to hire new staff, purchase furniture and on-going business supplies for his hall.

None of this would have been possible in Concord if those living in the surrounding area did not have the money at their disposal. None of these success stories would have occurred in Thornhill had it not been for the foresight of the Harris government to cut taxes.

The previous Liberal and NDP governments believed that by increasing taxes they would stimulate the economy into a growth mode. Taxing and spending, as we all know, do nothing but kill jobs and hamper the hope of the average Ontarian. With less money in my constituents' pockets, they were only able to cover their day-to-day basic expenses and were not able to purchase extras.

Without the tax cut programs initiated by our government, both small and medium-sized businesses such as Spa Ambience Salon, Seven View Chrysler and Bellagio Banquet Hall would not have been able to grow in business, hire more people or enter the future looking forward to continual prosperity.

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As a government committed to our promise, we reduced Ontario's personal income tax rate 30% in our first term. We will reduce tax rates a further 20% and cut the provincial share of property taxes by 20%. These new tax cuts will help Ontario create in excess of 825,000 jobs over five years.

Fuelled by our tax cuts, Ontario has moved into a period of strong economic growth. Last year alone our economy expanded by 4.2%, double the rate of the rest of Canada. Ontario's turnaround in the last four years is a direct result of hard-working Ontarians and strong leadership of Mike Harris. In this short time, we have been able to reverse the high unemployment created by years of Liberal and NDP tax hikes. Due to low interest rates and a strong competitive position, consumer spending, housing demands and business investment have gone up.

With an increase in disposable income, more Ontarians are now able to upgrade themselves from being renters to owning their own homes. The down payment for a new home is no longer seen as a distant dream but a definite reality that is attainable. This is an opportunity to own their own home, of which more people are taking advantage.

In Thornhill, new subdivisions of single-family dwelling units and condominiums are rising quickly. A local small business, a plumbing company, Vitullo Bros Plumbing, started off in just the plumbing industry. Five years ago they increased their business and they developed Century Grove Homes. They are now in the building industry. In the last four years they have built 70 homes. I've spoken to Mr Vitullo and he's told me that the sales are growing rapidly. In the last two or three years the economy has been booming. Mortgage rates are stable. More people are being able to get mortgages and more people are buying homes. He's also involved in residential and commercial developments.

This development would not proceed if it were not for the tax cuts which have provided more money for Ontarians. This growth of building has also provided stability for many construction workers who are now reaping the benefits and prosperity fuelled by our government's tax cuts.

Ontario business investment reached \$38.5 billion last year. This is a significant increase over the past few years. Markham, which is in York region, will be the

home of a new \$125-million software development laboratory for IBM. The Thornhill community in my neighbourhood riding will also benefit from this growth.

The new subdivisions I spoke of earlier will help provide housing for all the new employees. The local merchants will see increased business. All of this will provide revenue that will help spur growth and prosperity to Ontarians.

Some have said that the increased economy in Ontario has been a result of our southern neighbours. I'd like to quote the Canadian Bond Rating Service, May 1998:

"Ontario taxpayers ... have now begun to benefit from tax reductions, business involvement and renewed consumer-led growth. Tax relief measures have contributed to consumer-led growth, job creation and reduced unemployment."

To conclude, I am pleased to have had the opportunity to speak on Bill 14.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I certainly want to have the opportunity to comment on the remarks by the member for Thornhill. We welcome her to the Legislature. I appreciate that she's certainly selling the message that the government has asked her to sell and to send out to her constituents, but it's interesting, the things that she doesn't care to mention.

She makes no reference at all to the massive increase in the debt that's been incurred under this government and the irresponsible actions as a result of that or the fact that the money has had to be borrowed in order to pay for the tax cut.

I'm also fascinated by the fact that as the member for Thornhill I'm sure she's hearing from many constituents who are using the 407, the public-private partnership that clearly is hurting many of her constituents. As the transportation critic, I know that we're hearing from a large number of people who are absolutely furious about the fact that the government, which likes to brag about this particular sale, has really burned the users of that system for the next 99 years; the fact that the tolls are going up without any real notice; the fact that people's driving licences can be taken away by this government if they don't pay the fees; the fact that there is this particular sweetheart deal between the government and the private consortium.

I would think that indeed she would be hearing a great deal about that. I would be curious to hear her comments on that, the fact that the government is acting as a Cadillac collection agency for this private consortium. I can tell you that a lot of her own constituents are contacting us, very upset about this deal, very upset about the fact that it's costing them an enormous amount, and they can't get through to the 407 ETR office at all. You can't get through. It's an enormous problem. It's been a real rip-off. They viewed it as being this deal and closed the door on it. It would be interesting to hear her comments on that.

As I said, I appreciate that she wants to send the message out that she does, but I think that is one of the con-

cerns her own constituents would have, the very, very raw deal that her constituents and many others across this part of the province have had with the 407.

Ms Lankin: I too join in welcoming the member from Thornhill to the Legislature. I'm pleased to respond to her remarks.

I noted that again, without talking a lot about the substance that's in the bill, like many government members she spent a lot of time talking on things like the economic record. One of the things I heard her talk about was some of the companies, Chrysler and Spa Ambience Salon, and that those investments would not have been there without her government's actions and her government's reduction in taxes. I know the member wasn't here prior to this election, but I always find it curious how the members opposite refuse to acknowledge the simple fact that 1994 saw the most significant amount, the highest amount ever of private sector investment in the province of Ontario.

That was before your government was elected. It was as we were beginning to come out of a recession, driven by fortunately—thank God, finally—changes in the Bank of Canada with respect to interest rates and our monetary policy, and a booming US economy. Why won't you acknowledge the role that played? Why do you play this silly game of pretending that it's simply your tax cuts that have fuelled the economy? Quite frankly, if you listened to the economists, the economists all suggest that while there is some stimulative effect from any tax cut, a tax cut that would have gone, for example, to sales tax would have been much more stimulative than a tax cut to income tax.

As you know now, 36% of the value of your income tax cut has gone to the wealthiest 6%. Those are not people who usually immediately go out and spend that. That might be in investments, it might be in savings, it may be in luxury items bought from offshore; it's not money that immediately recycles into the economy. So to say that all of that economic activity is due to the stimulative effect of the tax cuts just doesn't hold any water in terms of economists' views.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I would like to congratulate the member for Thornhill for pointing out certain economic fundamentals. I wonder sometimes whether the members across the way are getting the message. They say we're not getting it. If we're not getting it, I'd go back to the fundamental premise: If everything was so great during the last 10 years with the general idea that higher tax regimes brought you more exports, more growth, more jobs, more tax revenue—it certainly brought that in for both of the former regimes, because they also ramped up the provincial debt to nearly \$100 billion. We're all equally responsible, if you want to look at trying to concede certain realities.

The member for Beaches-East York points out the Bank of Canada interest rates, and certainly they played a key role. I'd be one of the first to mention that, but tax reductions have a major, fundamental influence to play as well. All you have to do is go and talk to your friends and neighbours in whatever sector of the economy, if they're

working—and a large number of people are today. I was talking to a friend of mine before I came over to this session this afternoon. I was asking him what was happening in his particular sector. He said, "You know, John, what is happening is that four of my close friends are leaving this country and they're going to Australia," not the United States. I said, "How come?" He said, "Generally because your tax rates across are reduced." That's the key message here.

1720

I'd also like to congratulate the Speaker for his selective hearing in the way in which this debate is going on. I hope he elevates those standards coming up shortly.

The Acting Speaker: I will ask the member to withdraw that comment and to offer apology to the Chair here.

Mr Hastings: I will not withdraw my comments.

The Acting Speaker: Then you'll be named. Withdraw the comment and apologize or be named.

I want to give the member one further opportunity to withdraw and apologize or be named. Okay, I'm naming the member.

Mr Hastings was escorted from the Chamber.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments and questions?

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): First of all, I would like to say that it was certainly a privilege for me in my experience before being elected to this House to call the member for Thornhill a colleague, and I continue to be very happy and proud to be a colleague of the member from Thornhill.

I want to make some comments about statements the member made earlier. I couldn't help note the statement that was made that from her perspective tax cuts create jobs. For me, today especially, that does not sit very well, especially with the recent news in my riding that 243 jobs have been lost. I don't believe that the tax cuts of this government are going to make those people feel any better now that they are out of work. These are hard-working, highly trained workers. Yes, they have a tax cut but they are out of a job.

I heard comments made about the average citizen and what the tax cuts have meant to average citizens, and as I stated last night in the House, when statements are made by the government, they forget to complete the statement. Last night we heard about more money in the pockets of Ontarians, but we didn't hear the part about the more debt we now have. We hear about tax cuts and more money in the pockets of Ontarians, but we don't hear about the cuts to services that people in Ontario value, and cuts to essential services.

Services in health care: We now have people not receiving cancer treatment within the prescribed period of time. Cuts in education: Students in special education programs in my riding are not getting the services they need and deserve, because boards are not adequately supported in those areas.

If you want to talk about tax cuts, finish the phrase and say, "And we've had to do it by cutting services to the people of Ontario."

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs Molinari: I'd like to thank the members from Thunder Bay-Superior North, Beaches-East York and Etobicoke North, and the member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and as the member mentioned, she and I were colleagues some time ago and sat on the same side and now we're on opposite sides, and certainly our views differ on a number of issues.

I'd like to address a few of the points that have been mentioned. With respect to the 407, members of Thornhill and the constituency there are very pleased to have an alternative for transportation to be able to travel, rather than the roads that are there, so they're very happy to be able to have that as an alternative.

I want to talk a little bit about the economy and the growth of the economy over the last two years. Yes, it's been stated that our southern borders have contributed to that, but all of the businesses that have started up would not have been able to continue had the economy not continued to grow.

I recall going back during the campaign, and some of the other members may have experienced similar, trying to find a campaign office, and all of the landlords had said that before 1995 there was so much space available and now, in 1999, there was hardly any space available just finding an office. Finding a constituency office was a similar problem. My office is located on Yonge Street. There is very little space on Yonge Street. That shows that the economy has been growing. People are now in business, there are not many vacant areas available out there.

So that has all contributed to the fuelling to the economy. We can't say that it's just because of our southern borders. A lot of it has to do with the tax cuts that have created jobs. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gravelle: I'm glad to join the debate today on Bill 14. Certainly there are a number of areas—I know we only have a very short period of time to speak in the Legislature these days, only 10 minutes.

Mr Bradley: Are we down to 10 minutes?

Mr Gravelle: We're down to 10 minutes, which is very unfortunate, so I'll try to get my remarks in.

There are certain aspects of Bill 14, which as you know is really an omnibus bill that covers a variety of aspects of the government, that are pretty important to everybody; for example, the Ambulance Act. They've got changes to the Ambulance Act. They're extending by a year the downloading of their responsibilities to the municipalities, and I think the question that really needs to be asked is why are they doing it in the first place. The provision of our ambulance services I believe very much is a provincial responsibility in the first place and should have remained so. I think what we are doing is leading ourselves into a situation where assessment-rich communities might have a better ability to support the land ambulance service in the future as opposed to those that

are assessment-poor. I very much worry about it. To me it should be a seamless system—ambulances are part of the health care system—so I've objected to that from the very beginning and I think that's important.

As my colleague from Kingston and the Islands said last night, when he made reference to the land transfer tax rebate being extended to the first-time buyers of new homes, it's something that should be extended to first-time buyers of existing homes. I think it would make a huge difference to people and I have often thought that was the case. Many constituents have contacted me about that particular aspect of the program. I think it should be extended to first-time buyers of existing homes.

There are so many things in this particular legislation that make you really see what's not there, and there are some very real disappointments. I am very pleased that there is indeed \$5 million that was set aside in the budget we saw back in May related to services who are diagnosed with autism. In Thunder Bay I have constituents with a child who has been diagnosed with autism and who are very keen to access some of those funds, and I hope those services do come to my part of the province. It's not a lot of money but we're glad to see it.

The problem is—and I hope that the Minister of Community and Social Services is listening, whoever is responsible for it—what we need to ensure is that there is real flexibility in terms of the criteria of how those funds can be accessed. I know that in the case of my constituents they have found an extraordinary program for their child which is making a huge difference. As you know it is important, when a child is diagnosed with autism, to have the program put in place very early to help them as much as possible. This particular family, which I have fought hard for, have found a program that really suits their child in a very positive way in the United States and I'm very much hoping that will be supported by this particular program. They have found a program that works. It happens to be in the United States and I hope there is support for that.

1730

What it brings me to as well is that what we've seen as a result of some of this government's actions is that in the headlong rush and determination to provide tax cuts—tax cuts which of course appeal to people on a very visceral level, there's no question about it—we've seen some enormous cuts to the system, and some of the cuts that concern me very much are very clearly to those people who are most vulnerable in our society. I can tell you that I have some very great concerns about the funding envelope for the associations—

Interjections.

Mr Gravelle: I'd prefer not to be heckled. I'm going to be talking about people who are very vulnerable who are receiving help from the government but in very diminished amounts. Last week, for example, I met with the board of the Geraldton District Association for Community Living, an organization that is doing wonderful work with many of the clients they have in the Geraldton district, but their very real concern is that the support

they need will not be there. There is one particular constituent, and I've been given permission to use her name, Chantal Trepanier, who has had very many difficulties over the years. As a result of being taken care of and having assistance given to her by the Geraldton District Association for Community Living she has really made extraordinary progress in terms of her living arrangements, her enjoyment of life, her relationship with her parents.

My concern, very much so, is that the support the ministry needs to provide will not be there for Chantal, that there will be a determination that that's more than they're willing to provide. I think that's very wrong. The government has a responsibility to help those who are vulnerable, especially those who can be helped by those services. I will certainly be speaking to the minister about it. In fact, I have a meeting tomorrow morning with somebody in Thunder Bay, in the ministry, related to this issue.

I really want to advocate, as strongly as I can, that that support be there. I can tell you that the same pressures are on the association in Thunder Bay, the Lakehead Association for Community Living, and all other associations that are trying to provide services and have people live lives of dignity.

My youngest brother has Down's syndrome. We love my brother Mark very much. We are very grateful for the help that we get from the Lakehead Association for Community Living. He lives in a group home. He has a wonderful life. Our worries are that the support will be withdrawn, that there won't be the full 24-hour support, that there will be more of a focus on: How can you cut corners? How can you find a way to provide less support?

That worries all of us and it should worry the government as well. I'm afraid that's what the focus has been, looking at the bottom line, how you can save money, rather than how you can provide service. That's a real mix-up in priorities. I hope the government members are sensitive to that.

There's also the whole issue in terms of special education funding which concerns me very much. I had the opportunity last week to speak in the Legislature about that in terms of the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board. The fact is that they are literally working as best they can with the Ministry of Education. What's happening is that they are very carefully and in great detail documenting the needs for the people who are the students who are in the system, but the ministry is not prepared to support that at this time, which is an extraordinary worry for the parents and for the children themselves.

They have an absolute right to have the government support them. We need to have that intensive support amount, not just frozen but fitting the needs that are in place.

I must tell you that I am very concerned about that. We've heard it in the Legislature. All across the province, those concerns are very real.

With the little time I have left, I want to be sure that I talk about the fact that one of the disappointments we had in the budget this year, and we don't see it in this bill either, is that in terms of the northern health travel grant, we have not seen any recognition by the ministry or the minister that it is a terribly underfunded program and very inadequately funded in terms of the need.

What we do know is that the government made a decision about six months ago that they were going to provide funds so that cancer patients from southwestern Ontario, southern Ontario, who were not able to receive treatment in time were able to go and access the services in Thunder Bay at the Northwestern Ontario Regional Cancer Centre. We're pleased that the regional cancer centre was able to help look after those people who deserve to have the treatment in the right period of time. There's no question about it.

What was upsetting to us was that the government chose to say, "We're going to give you the opportunity to go to Thunder Bay and we're going to pay all your expenses; we're going to pay for your travel; we're going to pay for your accommodation; we're going to pay for your food," whereas if you live in northern Ontario—Speaker, you will know about this yourself—and you are not able to access the medical services you need in your community and you need to travel elsewhere, there is a very limited amount which is allowed under the northern health travel grant.

What we have are stories upon stories of constituents who have had to shell out thousands of dollars to receive that care. I just, right now, spoke to a constituent from Red Rock, Liz Harvey-Foulds, who was telling me about her daughter Laura who is having some difficulties accessing the heritage fund program because she had to receive private physiotherapy services.

The point is that the program is underfunded, the program is inadequate. It's not fair that those of us who are not able to access service and have to go down to Toronto, or even to Thunder Bay from Geraldton or Longlac or Marathon, are not able to receive the support they deserve.

My colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Lyn McLeod, and I have launched a petition campaign. We've had thousands upon thousands of signatures. I think we're getting close to 10,000 signatures. We've had support from almost every municipality in northwestern Ontario asking the minister to look at that. We will continue to ask her to do that, because we believe that until the medical services are available, this program should be helping people out to a much greater degree. It's something that I feel very strongly about.

We know there are a number of programs that quite literally the ministry could do more for. We have great concerns simply about the funding for our regional hospital in Thunder Bay. We know that we need to receive what everyone else in the province has received, which is 70% funding for the capital construction of provincially approved projects. At this stage, that has not yet been confirmed by the ministry, and I have great worries about

that. We have great concerns about physician shortages. We have great concerns about the fact that nurse practitioners are not being funded the way they need to be and are not being used.

Mr Bradley: Ophthalmologists.

Mr Gravelle: Ophthalmologists. The member for St Catharines points that out as well.

There are real problems. I'm concerned about the physiotherapy services in northwestern Ontario no longer being supported by the government. I trust that will be corrected as they remove the G-code status.

There are lots of concerns. I regret my time has come to an end. It's unbelievable that we only have this amount of time to express our concerns to our constituents.

Mr Bradley: I think you should have more time.

Mr Gravelle: The member for St Catharines thinks I should have more time. I wish I did. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this bill.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to take just a moment to introduce some guests from the Ontario Association of Community Based Boards for Acquired Brain Injury Services.

In the gallery today we have Deb Delorme, who is the executive director of Dale Brain Injury Services of London and a board member of the Ontario Association of Community Based Boards for Acquired Brain Injury Services; Joanne Bregman, who is a board member and former participant in Dale Brain Injury Services of London, and Joanne's parents, Robert and Agnes Bregman; Marcia Smith, who is a board member of Dale Brain Injury Services of London; and Mike Quinlan, who is a board member of both Dale Brain Injury Services of London and the Ontario Association of Community Based Boards for Acquired Brain Injury Services.

I hope my colleagues will welcome them to this House this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order, but we're always happy when people visit us here in the House.

Comments and questions?

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I wanted to respond to the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North and his speech on the budget. I have a few points that I would like to make. I wanted to compliment him on his speech. It would seem to me that if he can't say in 10 minutes what he has to say, he should shorten it or something. But to complain that 10 minutes is too short, I'm not going to stand here and say that my two minutes is.

I think he's absolutely right in one way, and that is that, yes, while we've been governing for the last four and five years, there has been a deficit each year, albeit declining in the same method as we said it would four and a half years ago.

That's not to say that it hasn't increased; it has. I heard a speaker across say that it was between \$80 billion and \$85 billion. We could throw these figures around, but you'll remember your budget document that you released

before the election campaign in 1995 said \$88 billion. So we'll take that figure and subtract it from \$121 billion, and that is over the period of 1994 to the year 2000. You'll know that that's six years, and this present government has been in here for four, so the other two years would explain part of that increase.

The other one, of course, is that we have done properly and put up front the debt for Ontario Hydro, put it onto our books, and that will explain how that debt shows from \$88 billion to \$121 billion; six years, and we've been here four. I just wanted to make that point.

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M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : I am pleased to have a chance to talk on Bill 14. I would like to congratulate my colleague from Thunder Bay-Superior North on his remarks on this budget bill.

This government, from what I hear, is always saying all they provide for all Ontarians. Par contre, si je pense à ma communauté francophone, je m'inquiète. Pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, ce gouvernement a annoncé des coupures drastiques pour les francophones.

Premièrement, on a décidé de couper 3,5 \$ millions à l'Université de Guelph. Le collège d'agriculture d'Alfred relève de l'Université de Guelph. Encore là, ce sont les francophones qui vont être pénalisés parce qu'on se doit de couper et on va aller couper au collège d'Alfred. Improbable.

On a coupé aussi un montant assez important à l'Office des affaires francophones. On a coupé le programme qui était le plus intéressant, qui était très valable pour les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes, le développement économique. On a besoin de ce développement économique, et c'est le programme où on est allé sabrer. Alors, je suis bien inquiète de voir ce qui arrive et j'espère que ce gouvernement va penser aux coupures qu'il fait. Si on dit qu'on veut tout donner aux Ontariens, bien, pensons à la communauté francophone.

Mr Young: I've listened intently to the debate over the last short while on this very important bill, and I think one can summarize it very clearly in this way: It's generally acknowledged that the economy of this province is red-hot. There is clearly a dispute between the two sides of the Legislature as to why that is so, but I don't think anyone in this chamber today or at any time would deny that we have an economy that is second to none in this country and that is far better than those of most states.

We saw even in the Toronto Star most recently how we had been outstripping the performance and the economic growth in the United States, and we're very proud of that. We're very proud of the hundreds of thousands of people who are off the welfare rolls. We're very proud of the 43,600 new jobs that were created just in the month of October, and the in excess of 600,000 that have been created since we took office.

What I hear from the other side of the Legislature—and I can understand their concern, albeit misplaced and misinformed—is that they are concerned about quality of life. They are saying to you, Mr Speaker, that the cost is too great.

I had the honour of being in the YMCA recently in the greater Toronto area, and I have in my hand here their annual report from this last fiscal year. It's most interesting that the YMCA now in this current year is finding that the number of people who require financial assistance is markedly down, by 3,000, yet the number of people served at this recreational facility is up by 112,000. I think that speaks very clearly to the issue of quality of life. I'm pleased that because more people are working, because they have more money in their pocket, they are enjoying their life in a fashion that we all hope to.

Mr Bradley: It's quite obvious that it's the low dollar and low interest rates which have fuelled the economy, in addition to the huge demand coming from the United States. I know the Premier has sent a letter to President Bill Clinton thanking him for his economic policies, which have benefited immensely the province of Ontario.

I was waiting for the member—he didn't have time in 10 minutes to talk about the comments of the member for Brampton Centre on food banks. There's the Harris government, as large as life—

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Has the member from St Catharines got proof of that statement? Mr Speaker, on a point of order—

Mr Bradley: He's not going to use up my time, I hope.

The Acting Speaker: A point of order.

Mr Galt: Would the member for St Catharines table the letter that he's referring to that's been sent to Mr Clinton?

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much. I know you'll put the time back on the clock.

I wondered. I looked and I said they were, as large as life, attacking the food banks today, the Harris government, but will they attack the big banks, the Bank of Commerce, CIBC, Bank of Montreal, Bank of Nova Scotia, Royal Bank, all of whom are putting the boots to people out the door while making unprecedented profits? But you people on that side, the member for Willowdale and his friends, are people who obviously think this is the way things should be, that they should make unprecedented profits while they bully their people out the door and provide lousy service to the people of this province.

I also want to say that they're as large as life, Mike Harris and his friends, as large as life standing up to those food bank people like that, but when it comes to dealing with the oil barons, with the corporate captains of the gasoline industry, they're like pussycats. I saw the Premier today with a tiger cat; well he's a pussycat when it comes to dealing with the oil barons and the captains of the oil industry out there.

I know the member didn't have time to talk about that. I'm sorry.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Gravelle: I'd like to thank the members for Ottawa-Vanier, St Catharines, Perth-Middlesex and

Willowdale for their comments. I want to thank the member for Perth-Middlesex particularly for confirming the debt in the last four years, the huge debt that was there. I appreciate your confirming to the people of Ontario the massive debt that has been added on since 1995. That was very useful I think, for people to hear that.

Member for Ottawa-Vanier, I really appreciate your remarks in particular. Because of the limited time I have, there are so many issues I couldn't get to, and when you talked about the cost to francophone services, I must say that too has relevance to my riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North. There are many francophones living in my riding and I am working on my French. I want to tell them if they're listening that I'm trying my very best, so merci. I appreciate your comments.

Ms Lankin: That's it? How about merci beaucoup?

Interjections.

Mr Gravelle: Certainly I've got a very long way to go, you're right. You see, with a name like Gravelle, I've got to work on it. My grandparents were from Quebec.

The member for Willowdale, I think you're right about the fact that we're very concerned. I don't think one can be criticized for that, I hope. I'm very concerned about the fact that we have constituents such as the ones I talked about in my remarks who are in need of service and whose lives have been changed in a very positive way as a result of the services that have been provided through the government of Ontario that may be removed as a result of the cuts.

It's very important that everyone in the Legislature recognize that's one of our responsibilities, to be able to help people improve their lives. You talk about it all the time. What I'm describing are situations of people who really have had their lives turned around in a positive way, and Chantal Trepanier in Geraldton is an example of that. I want to be very sure that support remains. I think it's important that it does. So I want you to understand that's where my concern comes from and I think it's fair game to expect the government to continue that support.

The member for St Catharines is very helpful, as always in pointing out the fact that the Premier should certainly be thanking Bill Clinton for the fact that the economy is reacting the way it is and, as always, his comments are much appreciated.

All I can tell you is that it means a great deal to me that I represent my constituents, and all of them equally, something that I'm not so sure this government does. I think it has those it cares for more than others. That to me is wrong and I'm glad to have had an opportunity to make some remarks today.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Lankin: Just before I begin, I say to the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North that I understand he says he's working on his French and he thought he'd give it a try and he said merci. One of the things you can do is learn a word a day. So let's add beaucoup to it, merci beaucoup. It's just to increase the vocabulary there. I've

been a student of French too and I'm paralyzed when I get up in the House to try and use it. I'm very sympathetic.

On the bill that we have before us today, there's been a lot of debate that has gone on, as often happens in this House, where people stray off the bill and talk about broader issues. That happens on all sides.

Mr Bradley: I hate that.

Ms Lankin: The member for St Catharines says he hates when that happens. I know, that was tongue in cheek, he said that tongue in cheek.

It is, though, at times very difficult therefore to convey to the members of the public the importance of some of the pieces of legislation that are before us and some of the elements in the bills that are problematic. I know that the member from Perth said, "If you can't say it in 10 minutes, then you can't say it at all," or, "You should give up on that." I beg to differ with him. A bill like this is very complex, an omnibus piece of legislation. He will know that means there are many pieces of legislation that are being changed, amended by this particular bill. There's a lot of content here. With most of the speeches that we hear from those we look to to explain their intent with the bill, the government members, about broad government programs, we really aren't having a lot of information provided to the general public about the content of the bill.

The bill itself, as I indicated, is an omnibus legislation. I just want to highlight the number of pieces of legislation in Ontario that are affected by this bill, that this bill will amend if it is passed in this Legislature:

Part I amends the Ambulance Act; part II, the Assessment Act; part III, Capital Investment Plan Act, 1993; part IV, Commodity Futures Act; part V, Community Small Business Investment Funds Act.

I'll forget the parts and just read on in terms of the pieces of legislation: the Corporations Tax Act; Education Act; Electricity Act, 1998; Employer Health Tax Act; Fair Municipal Finance Act, 1997; Financial Administration Act; Income Tax Act; Land Transfer Tax Act; Local Roads Boards Act; Ministry of Government Services Act; Municipal Act; Northern Services Boards Act; Ontario Guaranteed Annual Income Act; Provincial Land Tax Act; Retail Sales Tax Act and complementary amendments; Securities Act; Toronto Stock Exchange Act and complementary amendments; and then the commencement and short title of the bill.

1750

The advent of omnibus legislation as we know it today in this House began under the first term of the Harris government. It is a technique, a tactical approach on the part of government, to deal with a lot of pieces of legislation at the same time.

I have some sympathy where you are talking about a series of technical amendments or housekeeping amendments or bringing some things up to date, because often in the life of the Legislative Assembly, pieces of legislation like that would await time on the legislative agenda. Ministries would have legitimate requests to legislators to

review their piece of legislation, to make updating amendments, yet there would be no time in a busy agenda with a lot of major policy or political items on the list for these items to be dealt with. So there is some I guess sympathy for those types of amendments to different pieces of legislation to be banded together in an omnibus act.

I do say, although I know that this has been ruled in order and, by virtue of rules, has been determined to be a procedure that this government wants to and can proceed with, that when it contains controversial pieces embedded in what are otherwise technical amendments, it really gives cause for concern about the process of airing and debating legislation, and in fact developing good legislation and good public policy.

In the debate that has gone on so far, I've had an opportunity in a couple of the responses in question period to raise two sections of the act with which I am particularly concerned; one in particular, and I'll spend most of my time on that. I have yet to have a government member respond. No one will talk about these sections or explain them. I think there is a shortfall in the democratic process when that's the case, when you can't get the government on record as to why certain things are being done.

Let me speak specifically to section 15 of the act, which deals with the Ministry of Government Services Act. Not in the amendments itself in terms of new words being put in the act, but in sections being repealed under the existing act, we find that this piece of legislation will take away rights from the workers of the Ontario Realty Corp.

The Ontario Realty Corp is a relatively new agency. It is a spinoff from the former Ministry of Government Services that was responsible for all land and property management in the province of Ontario. I had the honour at one time to be the Minister of Government Services and have some familiarity with the work that was done there and is now done under the Ontario Realty Corp. This government has moved it out even further away from government and has stated an intention to sell off parts of the portfolio, to reshape the portfolio of asset holdings of that agency, and to look at the privatization of that agency.

The changes in this legislation would, if ORC is privatized, take away the successor rights of the employees. The employees of the Ontario Realty Corp are currently members of a union. They have a collective agreement. They have certified under the laws of the province their union and their bargaining agent. They have gone through negotiations. They have an agreement which both sides must live up to. Rights and obligations are spelled out therein.

In the private sector, whenever a company is sold, a buyer must come in and do a due-diligence exercise and take a look at what it is they are proposing to buy and make an assessment about the value. When they are doing the evaluations, they include in that not just the assets that they see on the face of the company books, but

the liabilities: if there are debts, if there are outstanding loans, if there are obligations.

One of the obligations in the private sector that must be lived up to is the obligation of a contract to the employees. It is sold along with the business. Why is that a fine standard in the private sector, but in the public sector, when the government is the employer—or in this case the quasi-employer by having spun this off to an agency—why is it OK for them with a stroke of a pen to write off the rights and the obligations and responsibilities to the employees therein? It's not just the salary levels. It's vacation, it is benefits, it is seniority, it is rights of promotion. All of those things that are hard-won through collective bargaining are just being written off and signed away.

I believe the purpose of that would be to increase the value of the asset, because you can say to the buyer: "Come on, take this. There are no obligations to the employees. You'll start from square one. There will be no union. There will be no obligations of a contract. You can do what you will out there and see what happens in the open market." Why should that government employer be able to increase the value of its assets, in this case, at the expense of the employees?

I remember many years ago an interest arbitration award that was looking at public sector salaries and was looking at equating them to private sector where the right to strike exists. This was in a non-right-to-strike sector. A very prominent arbitrator, one of the top arbitrators of the day—and I might get this wrong because it's a long time ago, but I believe it was Ken Swan at the time; it was one of the prominent arbitrators—wrote that we cannot expect that public services will be delivered at the cost or the expense of public sector workers and their salaries or their benefits, that you have to have fairness and equity between the open private market and what happens in a free-market condition and what happens in the more controlled public sector.

By this act, the government is taking away from employees rights duly won under existing laws and they have yet to stand and defend why. I find that very disturbing. I find it very disturbing that we can't have a debate in this Legislature about the propriety of that sort of action on the part of a government. I find it disturbing that it is buried in an omnibus bill and that nobody on the government side—and members who have been here know I have raised this how many times asking speakers: "Please speak to this issue. You're defending the bill. You're here to defend the bill on the part of the government; you're speaking in favour of it. Explain this to me."

One member whom I spoke to just in a side conversation said: "Well, I went and checked and I understand it's not an issue because they're going to downsize anyway, they're going to lay off the employees anyway." I hope that message is going to get out now to the employees, but it doesn't matter how many employees are left at the end of your downsizing exercise; they still have rights under a contract and their downsizing will be governed

by the rights under that contract. Again, I find this disturbing and I wish the government would respond to it.

The second issue that I just want to raise briefly is to point out that in this bill you break a promise. I don't think it's such a big thing, what you're proposing here. When you sell assets, you said that every dollar would go to paying down the debt. You're saying you have the right, or cabinet has the right, to put it in general reve-

nues. Fine with me. But stand up and take responsibility and finally, please, someone just admit that this is a broken promise, that you've changed your mind.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguee aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
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Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
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Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
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Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
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Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
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Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
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		Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
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		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Règlements et projets de loi privés**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
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Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
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